

**THE WILLIAM BREMAN JEWISH HERITAGE MUSEUM  
ESTHER AND HERBERT TAYLOR  
JEWISH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF ATLANTA  
AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE**

**MEMOIRIST:** ALVIN M. FERST, JR.  
**INTERVIEWER:** IRVING B. SCHOENBERG (IRV)  
**LOCATION:** ATLANTA, GEORGIA  
**DATE:** AUGUST 19, 1992  
AUGUST 24, 1992

<Begin Tape 1, Side 1>

**INTERVIEW BEGINS**

**Irv:** This is Irv Schoenberg. I'm interviewing the memoirist, Alvin Ferst—Alvin M. Ferst, Jr.—on the 19<sup>th</sup> of August, 1992 for the Jewish Oral History Project of Atlanta, cosponsored by American Jewish Committee, Atlanta Jewish Federation, and the National Council of Jewish Women. I have with me today our memoirist Alvin Ferst, whose background and whose history as he remembers it is going to be a very interesting addition to the oral history. Let me start, Alvin, with some of your earliest . . . life and your background here in Atlanta. Tell us about your earliest memories of being here in Atlanta. Were you born in Atlanta?

**Alvin:** Yes, I was born in Atlanta. In fact, I was born in Atlanta when you were born in your home rather than the hospital. I was born on 1155 Boulevard<sup>1</sup>, which is now called Monroe Drive, and we had many illustrious neighbors around us there. All the Edison family lived around there, who later moved to St. Louis [Missouri] and formed the Edison Shoe Company<sup>2</sup>. We had the Bermans, who lived around the corner and the sons now run the Berman Lipton Office Supply place, we had the Steinheimers down the street. I think one of the Steinheimer boys is still in Atlanta, but they were a real old Atlanta family. And then we had the people in the candy business, the Schlesinger family who lived down the street from us, who had the old

---

<sup>1</sup> Boulevard is a street and corridor of the Old Fourth Ward neighborhood of Atlanta, Georgia. The street runs east of, and parallel to, Atlanta's Downtown Connector.

<sup>2</sup> Edison Brothers Stores, Inc., was a retail conglomerate based in St. Louis, Missouri. It operated numerous retail chains mainly located in shopping malls, mostly in the fields of shoes, clothing, and entertainment, with Bakers Shoes as its flagship chain. The company began in 1922, when brothers Sam, Harry, Mark, Irving, and Simon Edison opened their first shoe store, Chandler's, in Atlanta, Georgia. The brothers opened up a second shoe store, called Baker's, the next year. By 1928, the brothers operated 12 Chandler's stores. The company was liquidated in 1999, though some of the chains it operated continued under different owners.

Schlesinger candy company<sup>3</sup> here, which became very famous when Mr. Frank Neely<sup>4</sup>, who was one of the first industrial engineers in the country, married one of the Schlesinger girls, worked for Mr. Gantt . . . Dr. Gantt<sup>5</sup> and Dr. Taylor<sup>6</sup> in Pittsburgh [Pennsylvania]<sup>7</sup> in the early days of industrial engineering and scientific management, came back to Atlanta, and reorganized the Schlesinger Candy Factory and set it up to run on modern principles. Schlesingers then became a very successful company.

**Irv:** Specifically, Alvin, what was the address...you remember the address of the house that you were born in?

**Alvin:** 1155 Boulevard.

**Irv:** 1155 Boulevard. Where would that be in the present circumstances around the neighborhood?

**Alvin:** That is on, now I think called Monroe Drive, and it's...

**Irv:** Is that near the Red Cross?

**Alvin:** No, it's long before. You get just between Park Drive and Orme Circle.

**Irv:** Okay.

**Alvin:** We lived on Boulevard until I was about seven years old. Went to Samuel Inman School<sup>8</sup> kindergarten and first grade, and then we moved to Druid Hills<sup>9</sup>. An interesting highlight before we moved to Druid Hills, we had bought a house in Druid Hills and I was . . . I think it

---

<sup>3</sup> H. L. Schlesinger Candy Factory in Atlanta, Georgia was owned by Harry Louis Schlesinger. The factory manufactures candy & crackers.

<sup>4</sup> Frank Henry Neely (1884-1979) was born in in Augusta, Georgia. He graduated from Georgia Tech with a mechanical engineering degree. As a general manager of Rich's Department Store, he is credited with coming up with Rich's trademark motto, "The Customer is Always Right." During World War II he served as Southern Regional Director of the War Production Board.

<sup>5</sup> Henry L. Gantt (1861-1919) was an American mechanical engineer. He worked to develop scientific management and create new methods for industrial efficiency.

<sup>6</sup> Frederick Winslow Taylor (1856-1915) was an American mechanical engineer who worked in scientific management and helped to develop the modern field of industrial engineering.

<sup>7</sup> Pittsburgh is a city in the state of Pennsylvania in the United States. It was incorporated in 1794, and became a major manufacturing center in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>8</sup> Samuel M. Inman Middle School began as an elementary school in 1924, named for Samuel Martin Inman (1843–1915), an Atlanta civic leader who was passionate about education, philanthropy. Inman also was a cotton merchant and segregationist whose fortune was funded by slave labor. The school has been enlarged many times over the years, and in 1978, Inman was converted into a middle school.

<sup>9</sup> Druid Hills is an affluent neighborhood in the city of Atlanta, Georgia. The main campus of Emory University and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are located in Druid Hills. Druid Hills was designed by Frederick Law Olmstead and was one of his last commissions. A showpiece of the design was the string of parks along Ponce de Leon Avenue, which was designated as Druid Hills Parks and Parkways and listed on the National Register of Historic Places on April 11, 1975. The remainder of the development was listed on the Register as the Druid Hills Historic District on October 25, 1979.

was my seventh birthday. My mother was planning to move during the early part of that summer into the new house. Gladys Hirsch, Mrs. Jake Hirsch, who was a dear friend of the family's, said to my mother, "Doris, why don't you just have Alvin's birthday party at my house, so you won't have to worry about running the house and you can concentrate on just your move, not having to straighten up the house for a birthday party." The house that my seventh birthday party was held in the backyard of was on Lullwater Road<sup>10</sup>, where they filmed *Driving Miss Daisy*<sup>11</sup>.

**Irv:** Interesting. Exactly what was the date of your birth?

**Alvin:** May the 6<sup>th</sup>, 1922.

**Irv:** 1922, okay. Tell us a little bit about your . . . do you have any siblings?

**Alvin:** I have three daughters.

**Irv:** No, brothers or sisters.

**Alvin:** I'm sorry, siblings. I have a sister, Babette, who was married to Will Herzfeld in White Plains, New York. I have a brother, Harold, who has lived various places around the South, and currently lives in Gwinnet County. There's three of us.

**Irv:** Tell us something about your parents. How long had they been in Atlanta? How did they get to Atlanta?

**Alvin:** My mother was from Charleston, South Carolina<sup>12</sup>. My father was from Savannah, Georgia<sup>13</sup>. They met when my father was in the Navy, at the Navy Yard in Charleston<sup>14</sup> in World War One<sup>15</sup>, were married after the war, and immediately moved to Atlanta.

---

<sup>10</sup> Lullwater Road is a residential street in the affluent Druid Hills neighborhood of Atlanta, Georgia, connecting Ponce de Leon to Emory University's campus. It was one of the filming locations for the film *Driving Miss Daisy*.

<sup>11</sup> *Driving Miss Daisy* is a 1989 film based on the 1987 play of the same name, both written by Alfred Uhry. Starring Jessica Tandy and Morgan Freeman, the film chronicles the relationship between an elderly southern Jewish woman and her African-American driver. *Driving Miss Daisy* examines the social changes in the south from the 1940s to the 1970s, including a depiction of the Atlanta Temple Bombing of 1958. The film was well-received critically, but has also been critiqued for its nostalgia for the pre-Civil Rights era.

<sup>12</sup> Charleston, South Carolina is a coastal city in South Carolina, and the oldest in the state, incorporated in 1783. Prior to the Civil War, Charleston held a majority-enclaved population. Today, it is known for its architecture and is a popular tourist destination.

<sup>13</sup> Savannah is the oldest city in the U.S. state of Georgia. It is known for its historic architecture, making it a popular tourist destination. Savannah is a coastal city, 250 miles southeast of Atlanta on the border of Georgia and South Carolina.

<sup>14</sup> Previously called the Charleston Navy Yard, the Charleston Naval Shipyard was a site for the construction and repair of U.S. Navy vessels in the U.S. state of South Carolina. It was active from 1901 to 1996, and has been through various redevelopment effort since.

<sup>15</sup> World War I, also called First World War or Great War, was an international conflict that in 1914–18 embroiled most of the nations of Europe along with Russia, the United States, the Middle East, and other regions. The war

**Irv:** And what business was your father in?

**Alvin:** My father started out as a salesman for one of the uncles here in Atlanta, and he was in various manufacturing businesses doing a business career. One of the interesting highlights was one of the early businesses he owned was Ripley Ferst Outdoor Advertising Agency. He and Mr. Ripley formed the first outdoor advertising agency. My father sold the business out to Mr. Ripley, who later sold it out to General Outdoor Advertising, who later sold it out to a man named Turner<sup>16</sup>.

<memoirist and interviewer laugh>

**Irv:** That's a good start.

**Alvin:** But my father primarily been in manufactured ladies' hats, in the millinery business, and had offices, sales offices, all around the United States, until when I was in the millinery business, which is a long story in itself that we'll get into. But he was in various manufacturing businesses after that.

**Irv:** As a young boy, do you remember visiting the business and seeing what the manufacturing looked like?

**Alvin:** Yes, I . . .

**Irv:** How many people were employed?

**Alvin:** I spent a good bit of time in the factories. His millinery manufacturing business and offices were on Whitehall [Street] and Trinity [Street], and I spent many an hour down there with him, killing time and being fascinated by the things they did in designing and making hats.

**Irv:** How many people were employed, do you think?

**Alvin:** He had about 300, between 200 and 300 people at the peak of the business.

**Irv:** And where was the plant located?

**Alvin:** Right in downtown Atlanta, on Whitehall and Trinity. As he went into other manufacturing businesses, I spent time around there, and I think this is what made me have a desire to be an industrial engineer when I later went to college.

---

pitted the Central Powers—mainly Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey—against the Allies—mainly France, Great Britain, Russia, Italy, Japan, and, from 1917, the United States. It ended with the defeat of the Central Powers.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Edward “Ted” Turner III (born 1938) is an American media mogul and philanthropist. As a businessman, he is known as a founder of the Cable News Network (CNN), the first 24-hour cable news channel. He founded WTBS, which pioneered the superstation concept in cable television. As a philanthropist, he is known for his \$1 billion gift to support the United Nations.

**Irv:** Tell us a bit about your mother and your father both. What kind of activities were they involved in, other than your father's business?

**Alvin:** Mother was one of the first people to form . . . she was with the people that formed the Dekalb League of Women Voters<sup>17</sup>, and was very active in the Dekalb League, probably would've been president of the Dekalb League, but my father died very young. She was the vice president. When my father died, she just got out of all activities. Her main activities had been the Council of Jewish Women<sup>18</sup> and the League of Women Voters, were the two things she was most interested in. She had been very much interested in a lot of areas in music and art and attended all of the musical affairs we had in Atlanta in those days. When we were growing up, it wasn't anything like you have now.

**Irv:** I don't think we mentioned your father's name or your mother's name.

**Alvin:** My father . . . I'm a junior, so my father was Alvin M. the first.

**Irv:** What's the M stand for?

**Alvin:** Meinhardt.

**Irv:** Meinhardt.

**Alvin:** Family name. My mother was Doris Marks. She was from Charleston, South Carolina. Interesting enough, her family had one of the first five and ten cent stores in the country. As they became successful, my grandfather and his brothers decided to get out of the business, because so many of their friends wouldn't come in a place that didn't have anything over ten cents. They went into the department store business and went out of business in the late 1930s like many other businesses . . . early 1930s, excuse me. Mr. Woolworth<sup>19</sup> did pretty well.

**Irv:** Yes. You mentioned that you had some uncles. Who specifically are we talking about?

---

<sup>17</sup> The League of Women Voters is a civic organization that was formed by Carrie Chapman Catt in 1920 to help women take a larger role in public affairs. It does not support or oppose candidates for office at any level of government but rather works to increase understanding of major public policy issues and to influence public policy through education and advocacy.

<sup>18</sup> The National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), founded in 1893, is the oldest Jewish women's organization in the United States. NCJW states its purpose as "improving the quality of life for women, children, and families, and to safeguarding individual rights and freedoms both in the U.S. and Israel," and as of 2019 has 62 active sections throughout the United States.

<sup>19</sup> Frank Winfield Woolworth (1852-1919) was the American retail entrepreneur behind F. W. Woolworth Company. In 1913, he built the Woolworth Building in New York City, which then was the tallest building in the world.

**Alvin:** Well, my father had a number of brothers and one sister. He had a brother in Savannah [Georgia] then Augusta [Georgia]<sup>20</sup>, and then in Atlanta were both Frank Ferst and Monie Ferst. Monie was the founder of Scripto<sup>21</sup>, and also had a large business called M. A. Ferst Limited, which manufactured pencil leads and erasers for pencil manufacturers all over the country. In later years he finally, when everybody would finally learn he owned Scripto also, he finally merged the two companies together. Frank worked in the business with Monie. My first job, between my sophomore and junior year in high school . . . no, excuse me, my junior and senior year in high school, I worked down at that plant and worked under Frank. I was very close to both Monie and Frank after my father died 40 years ago. While Frank wasn't like a father to me, he was because he . . .

**Irv:** Would you consider him a mentor?

**Alvin:** Oh, very much so. Started out when I lived on Boulevard. I can remember my father ordered a wholesale bicycle for me when I was five years old. He had ordered a size 24, and it wasn't until the night before, when he put it together, that he found out he got a 28. Wasn't anything he could do about it then. Frank spent the whole day running up and down Boulevard with me, trying to get me to learn to ride that size 28 bicycle. My feet could only hit the pedal when it came to the top.

<Irv and Alvin laugh>

**Irv:** Well you had a . . .

**Alvin:** Frank was an amazing person himself. He was a good student; he had a distinction with being one of the few people that played football at University of Georgia<sup>22</sup> and Tech [Georgia Institute of Technology]<sup>23</sup>. He played varsity football for five years, cause they had no limitations in those days. Played at Georgia one year, then he came to Tech and played

---

<sup>20</sup> Augusta is a city in the U.S. state of Georgia. About 150 miles from Atlanta, Augusta sits on the Savannah River and near the border to South Carolina.

<sup>21</sup> Scripto, originally known as M. A. Ferst Company, was a major manufacturer of writing instruments, founded in the 1920s by Monie Ferst in Atlanta, Georgia. In the 1950s, Scripto began manufacturing lighters in addition to writing instruments. Between 1964 and 1965, Scripto employees--the majority of whom were black women--went on strike due to low wages, long hours, and racial discrimination. The strike was supported by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and was resolved in 1965.

<sup>22</sup> The University of Georgia, founded in 1785, also referred to as UGA or simply Georgia, is an American public research university in the city of Athens in the U.S. state of Georgia.

<sup>23</sup> Georgia Institute of Technology (commonly referred to as 'Georgia Tech' or 'Tech') is a public research university in Atlanta, Georgia in the United States. It is a part of the University System of Georgia. The educational institution was founded in 1885 as the Georgia School of Technology as a part of Reconstruction plans to build an industrial economy in the post-Civil War Southern United States.

for four years. Graduated in chemistry. He didn't graduate when he was supposed to, because jobs were pretty tough then. He stayed on, got some more education the next year, and played football another year.

**Irv:** What years would those have been that he played football?

**Alvin:** Frank played football 1918 to 1922, back with a lot of the old football greats. You had to be tough to play football because you played offense and defense. I was sort of disappointed when the newspapers had a ballot a few weeks ago on all-time greats not to see him in there, cause I was too young to recognize him. But all of his contemporaries said he was the toughest defensive man they'd ever seen. He primarily was used as offense, but they said nobody ever got around him if he could get his hands on him.

**Irv:** Well, it sounds like you had a fairly good-sized family then, here in Atlanta.

**Alvin:** Yeah, we did. Family . . . we were small and we were big. I mean there are not a lot of Fersts in Atlanta. There was Frank Ferst, Alvin Ferst, and Monie Ferst. That was it.

**Irv:** But you had cousins?

**Alvin:** Yeah, they all had . . . Frank and Sylvia had no children. Monie and Helen had a son and daughter. Monie was a great influence on me in that he was a real businessman. He was the sort of person . . . he was real . . . not only a good businessman, he was a forward-thinking person, a good financial man. So much so that he and two or three other people in New York, that week before the crash in 1928, and they sold everything the day before the crash. That's how well attuned they were. They were up there to try to figure out what was going on.

**Irv:** You say Monie; I'm not sure I know that name. How would you spell that?

**Alvin:** M-O-N-I-E. He was born with another name, but when he went to school . . . he was born as Moses Ferst. But there was another Moses Ferst in Savannah, a cousin, and they were both in the same class. So the teacher just turned to him and said, "I can't call both of you Moses. I'm going to call you Monie." So as he got to be an adult, everybody called him Monie all his life, so he just went to court and had his name changed to Monie.

**Irv:** Since this is an oral history about the Jewish community, you said you went to Inman grade school?

**Alvin:** Samuel Inman.

**Irv:** Were there a lot of Jewish kids going to that school at the time?

**Alvin:** Well, there weren't a lot of us going anywhere at that time. Atlanta was a pretty small city, and other than the names that I mentioned of the people in my neighborhood, that was about the extent of it. It so happened that all of us lived . . . no particular reason, but most of the Jewish people in that neighborhood were centered around there. If you went a little further over, to Highland Avenue or got over to Seminole [Avenue]<sup>24</sup>, St. Augustine [Place]<sup>25</sup>, some of those streets, well that was in Highland School<sup>26</sup> district where Cecil Alexander<sup>27</sup> and the Jacobuses and a lot of those people there, like my friend Joe Rosenburg, a lot of those people lived over in there. They all went to Highland School. It was just another district.

**Irv:** If you were born in 1922 and you were seven years old and apparently going to school at that time, that would have been about 1929.

**Alvin:** Mm-hm.

**Irv:** What was the attitude toward the Jewish population in Atlanta? Do you have a feeling for that?

**Alvin:** Well, the Jewish . . . it was a completely different attitude. I'm sort of a freak cause I never paid any attention to it. But a lot of people carried a chip on their shoulder because the Jewish people generally kept to themselves. Dr. Marx<sup>28</sup> at the Temple<sup>29</sup>, who was as strict a disciplinarian as you'll ever know, he was one of the first people to invite non-Jews to speak in The Temple. He did participate in things in the community later, but by and large most of the Jewish people in those days did not participate in activities of town like they do now and have in my whole business career, unless they were asked to.

---

<sup>24</sup> Seminole Avenue runs parallel to a section of Briarcliff Road, connecting the Atlanta, Georgia neighborhoods of Atkins Park and Little Five Points.

<sup>25</sup> St. Augustine Place runs parallel to a section of Ponce de Leon Avenue, in the Atlanta, Georgia neighborhood of Atkins Park.

<sup>26</sup> Highland Elementary School was located on North Avenue in the Atlanta, Georgia neighborhood of Poncey-Highlands. It operated as a school from 1911 to 1976. The building is on the National Register of Historic Places in Fulton County, Georgia, and in 2003 was renovated into a condominium complex called the Highland School Lofts.

<sup>27</sup> Cecil Abraham Alexander Jr. (1918-2013) was a prominent Atlanta architect and civic leader. As a partner in the architectural firm FABRAP, he was responsible for some of the city's most notable buildings. During the civil rights movement of the 1960's and 1970's, he was a leader in the movement to peacefully desegregate the city's public housing and local businesses.

<sup>28</sup> Rabbi David Marx was a long-time rabbi at the Temple in Atlanta, Georgia. He led the move toward Reform Judaism practices. He served as rabbi from 1895 to 1946. When he retired, Rabbi Jacob Rothschild took the pulpit that Rabbi Marx had held for more than half a century.

<sup>29</sup> The Temple, or 'Hebrew Benevolent Congregation,' is Atlanta's oldest Jewish congregation. The cornerstone was laid on the Temple on Garnett Street in 1875. The dedication was held in 1877 and the Temple was located there until 1902. The Temple's next location on Pryor Street was dedicated in 1902. The Temple's current location in Midtown on Peachtree Street was dedicated in 1931. The main sanctuary is on the National Register of Historic Places. The Reform congregation now totals approximately 1,500 families (2015).

**Irv:** Can you think of anyone who stood out in your mind as a youngster who was a community leader, a Jewish leader among the gentile population?

**Alvin:** Well yeah, there were many of them. Walter Rich<sup>30</sup>. Frank Neely is probably the most outstanding one. Frank Neely is probably the only man . . . in those days who was a member of The Temple, who was a member of the Piedmont Driving Club<sup>31</sup>, and a member of the Standard Club<sup>32</sup>. He was not Jewish, but his wife was Jewish. They were members of . . .

**Irv:** He covered all the bases.

**Alvin:** He did. But Sinclair Jacobs, whose family started Jacobs' Pharmacy<sup>33</sup>, a fine old Atlanta family, and the store where the first Coca-Colas<sup>34</sup> were sold over the counter. Sinclair was probably the first Jewish person in our Kiwanis Club<sup>35</sup>.

**Irv:** First name was?

**Alvin:** Sinclair Jacobs.

**Irv:** When you say "our Kiwanis Club," I think . . .

**Alvin:** The Downtown Kiwanis Club . . .

**Irv:** . . .Downtown Kiwanis Club . . .

---

<sup>30</sup> Walter Henry Rich (1880-1947) was a leading Atlanta merchant and philanthropist. He was president of Rich's department store, which was founded by his uncle Morris Rich.

<sup>31</sup> The Piedmont Driving Club is a private social club in Atlanta, Georgia with a reputation as one of the most prestigious private clubs in the South. Founded in 1887 originally as the Gentlemen's Driving Club, the name reflected the interest of the members to 'drive' their horse and carriages on the club grounds. The club later briefly used the adjacent grounds as a golf course until it sold the land to the city in 1904 to create Piedmont Park. The club's facilities include dining, golf, swimming, fitness, tennis, and squash. Well into the 20th Century, the club unofficially did not allow minorities to have memberships. In May 2000, the club built an 18-hole championship golf course and Par 3 course several miles away on Camp Creek Parkway

<sup>32</sup> The Standard Club is a private country club founded in 1867 in Atlanta, Georgia. Originally called the Concordia Association, the club was originally a Jewish social organization, established in response to other Atlanta social clubs not allowing Jewish members. In the 1980s, the Standard Club moved to John's Creek, Georgia.

<sup>33</sup> Jacobs' Pharmacy was a chain of drug stores founded by Joseph Jacobs. Jacobs was born in Jefferson, Georgia. He attended the University of Georgia in 1877 and received a degree from the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy in 1879. In 1879 Jacobs opened the Athens Pharmaceutical Company in Athens, Georgia. In 1884, he bought a drug store in Downtown Atlanta on the southwest corner of Peachtree and Marietta Streets where, in 1886, Coca-Cola was served for the first time as a fountain drink. There was also a Jacob's Pharmacy in the heart of Atlanta's Buckhead neighborhood where Charlie Loudermilk Park is now located.

<sup>34</sup> Coca-cola is a carbonated beverage and the flagship product of the Coca-Cola Company. It was invented in 1886 by John Stith Pemberton and was purchased by Asa Griggs Candler in 1889. The Coca-Cola Company is an American multinational beverage corporation headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia.

<sup>35</sup> Kiwanis International is an international, coeducational service club founded in 1915. It is a volunteer-led organization dedicated to building better communities, children, and youth.

**Alvin:** But in Kiwanis and Rotary<sup>36</sup>, there were a limited number. Lawrence Fox, who was the head of Fox Manufacturing Company in Rome and head of the Lawrence Furniture Stores (it was a retail chain). Lawrence was pretty well accepted in the community. Both of the Schwabs, Robert Schwab and Dick Schwab. Robert Schwab, who was born Jewish, actually converted to being Catholic later. Probably the . . . I guess probably the most prominent one after Frank Neely would have been Harold Hirsch<sup>37</sup>. Harold Hirsch was a lawyer, fine lawyer, and his firm was the old Hirsch and Smith firm which is now Kilpatrick and Cody<sup>38</sup>. And they were lawyers for Coca Cola. He defended the Coca Cola trademark. He defended their rights to conceal their formula, and was a real big man. He's a University of Georgia man, devout Georgia man. I can give a little story of Harold Hirsch and myself. Between that summer that I finally went to work down there in M.A. Ferst Limited, I had gone to all my father's friends. I was growing up, you know, all of them would say to you, "Well, Alvin, anytime you need anything, just come and see me. If I can help you, let me know." Well, I won't call any by name, but I went to see one that I thought the world of. He was a self-made man. He was an orphan and he had worked for somebody. He had learned the business, started his own business and he was very successful. And I went to see him. He looked at me, and said, "Alvin, you don't know anything." I said, "Well, no. I'm here looking for a job because I've got two more years in high school, and I'd like to be thinking about what I'd like to do when I go to college. And if I don't get some exposure to business, how am I going to know what I want to do." He said, "Well, I'm sorry. I can't do anything for you." I left there just feeling terrible. The next place I went, the man was a head of a large company he and his family had started. They later sold out to a national company.

---

<sup>36</sup> Rotary International is an international service organization whose stated purpose is to bring together business and professional leaders in order to provide humanitarian services, encourage high ethical standards in all vocations, and help build good will and peace in the world. It is a secular organization with about 1.2 million members worldwide.

<sup>37</sup> Harold Hirsch (1881-1930) was a well-known attorney who was active in philanthropic organizations in the Atlanta area. He received his law degree in 1904 and soon became one of Atlanta's most prominent lawyers, helping Coca-Cola trademark its signature logo and bottle design in a number of copyright infringement cases. He was also involved in the creation of the law school at Emory University and one of the founding members of the faculty.

Hirsch was very involved in philanthropic endeavors, particularly those in the Jewish community. He was a member of the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation (the Temple), the Federation of Jewish Charities, the United Jewish Charities, and the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith. He helped found The Atlanta Committee for German-Jewish Relief and served as chairman of the organization.

<sup>38</sup> Milton W. Candler and William S. Thomson founded the law firm in Atlanta, Georgia that would become Kilpatrick & Cody in 1874. The firm became in-house counsel for the Coca-Cola Company, and as early as 1893 secured federal registration of the Coca-Cola trademark. After two merger sin the 1997 and again in 2011, the firm is now part of Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton, an international law firm headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia.

He was a regional vice president of this big national company, made more money than he knew what to do with. He and his wife, my mother and father had been friends with since about the first day my mother and father came to Atlanta. And he also had said, "Anything I can ever do for you, let me know." I had an appointment to see him. I got there on time. He kept me waiting for thirty minutes, and then when I came to his office, I'll never forget it. He had an office about 40 by 40, and his desk sat over in one corner of the office. There was this big cavernous office out in the front, and his door was over in a diagonal office. I walked in, he looked up, he said, "Sit down!" I sat down over 50 feet away from him, and he fumbled with papers for about 20 minutes before he saw me. And he said, "What do you want?" And I said, "Well, Mr. So-and-So, you've been very nice, and I've known you all my life. You said if you'd ever be any help to me, you'd be glad to do anything you could." And he said, "I really wish to." [I said,] "Out looking for a job, I don't care what it is, how much I make. I just want to try to learn something about business so I can try to decide what I want to try to do with myself when I go to college and plan a career." He said, "You ever work before?" "No, sir." He said, "Well what are you doing here?" And I said, "Well, I just thought you might have something I could do. I could pay my way, make a little bit of money and I could learn something about your business. It's been a very successful business, and I'd like to learn something." He said, "You're not any good to anybody. You're not worth anything. Go down to Western Union<sup>39</sup>. They'll give you a job. You can ride a bicycle delivering telegrams. Goodbye." Well, I walked out. I had to walk about ten blocks to meet my father. He had an appointment. I told him I'd meet him at that appointment and we could get together. We were walking through Five Points<sup>40</sup> together. We ran into Harold Hirsch, who I'd heard my father speak of. I'd seen him but never met him. He saw us and said "Alvin, how are you?" Dad said, "I'd like you to meet my son." He said, "What are you doing downtown on a weekday?" I said, "Mr. Hirsch, I'm really downtown looking for a job," and went through the same story with him. He says "You ever thought about being a lawyer?" I said, "Well no, sir, I really haven't." And he says, "You got any other appointments to make?" "Yes sir, I've got two

---

<sup>39</sup> Western Union began as a telegraph company providing telegram services to consumers. In 1871 it introduced a money transfer service. As the telephone replaced the telegraph, money transfer became its primary business. Today it is a financial services and communications company.

<sup>40</sup> Five Points refers to the downtown area of Atlanta, considered by many to be the center of town. It was the central hub of Atlanta until the 1960's, when the economic and demographic center shifted north toward the suburbs. It was recently revitalized, mostly due to Georgia State University having a large presence in the area.

more.” “You go ahead and make those two appointments. If you don’t get a job, you got a job at Hirsch and Smith. You’ll just be an office boy. But who knows, if you shuffle papers around, run errands for us, learn a little bit, listen to what lawyers are doing, you might get interested. You might like to be a lawyer.” So the next two places I went I was so fired up because I knew I had a job, both of them offered me a job.

<Alvin and Irv laugh>

**Alvin:** But this was just the kind of man Harold Hirsch was. He wanted to help everybody, and he did. He put more . . . he got more men to play football and go to school at the University of Georgia by telling them, “You make good grades and graduate, you’ll have Coca Cola bottling when you come out of school.”

**Irv:** Great. Let’s go back a little bit further in your youth. What did you do outside of going to school? Did you have any athletics or any organizational ties?

**Alvin:** No, I was just like . . . a normal kid, wanting to try to do everything, try to play everything. I . . .

**Irv:** Did you belong to any Jewish organizations?

**Alvin:** Yes, yes and no. I was at Druid Hills School<sup>41</sup> and I participated in all the athletic activities. When I graduated, I was the same height I am now, and I weighed about 115, 120 pounds. I tried to play football. I played basketball.

**Irv:** Your height is what, about six . . .

**Alvin:** Six [feet] one and a half [inches].

**Irv:** And you were six one and a half then.

**Alvin:** Yeah, I was just skin and bones. I played end on football team until I just got broken up so bad. I just kept breaking a bone a week. I played basketball and I lettered in basketball for four years.

**Irv:** This is at Druid Hills . . . Druid Hills High School?

**Alvin:** Yeah, lettered in tennis. I participated in every activity I could from everything from the Glee Club to heading up intramural activities. I just generally tried to participate in everything. As a result, I made good friends who were my friends all my life. As a result, 85

---

<sup>41</sup> Druid Hills School began when Emory University founded the Emory School in the Fishburne Building on the Emory Campus in 1919 as a public school for faculty children. In 1928, the K-11 school moved to its current site at 1798 Haygood Drive and renamed Druid Hills High School. In 1959, the elementary students were moved to Fernbank Elementary School and Druid Hills High School then housed grades 8-12.

percent of my friends when I got out of high school were non-Jews. Some of my friends--my Jewish friends--couldn't understand it. But they were the people I worked with, they were the ones I played with. I was a member of what was called a Top Hat Club<sup>42</sup>. You've probably never heard of the Top Hat Club, but this was like a little high school . . . Jewish high school fraternity. Primarily people at Druid Hills and Boys' High<sup>43</sup> and Tech High<sup>44</sup>.

**Irv:** Name a few people who were in there with you.

**Alvin:** Oh, Leman Rosenberg, Bobby Lipshutz<sup>45</sup>, Carl Reisman. Three of us happened to have been initiated . . . well, let me see. Carl Reisman, Bobby Lipshutz, and I were initiated in the club the same time. I'll never forget that initiation, which we won't talk about. But everybody . . . and Jack Eiseman was in there, and Henry Bloom, George Haas. I don't know if you know George or not. I don't think Cecil Alexander, I don't know why, but I don't remember Cecil being in there, but Charles Aronstam was in there. Bobby Rothberg, who is since deceased. All the Jewish young (unintelligible . . . going? T1-S1-02 2:53). Louis Cummins, we called him Babe Cummins. You're making me strain. That's a long time ago.

**Irv:** Yeah.

**Alvin:** All the kids about our age were in there. It was just a pure social thing.

**Irv:** How would you say that the Jewish . . . this was all boys? Or were there boys and girls?

**Alvin:** All boys.

**Irv:** All boys at Druid Hills. How would you say . . .

**Alvin:** Well, the school was boys and girls, I'm sorry.

**Irv:** But how would you say that your contemporaries stacked up academically, socially? I mean, did you stand out in the group or were you just sort of . . .

---

<sup>42</sup> The Top Hat Club was a social club that hosted elaborate, formal parties during December and the New Year's holidays. It was not specifically Jewish

<sup>43</sup> Boys' High School was founded in 1924 and is now known as Henry W. Grady High School. It is part of the Atlanta Public School System. It has had many notable alumni, including S. Truett Cathy, the founder of Chick-fil-A. It is located in Midtown Atlanta.

<sup>44</sup> Technological High School was only for boys interested in the applied sciences (electricity, automobiles, aviation, skilled manufacturing, etc.). Tech High and Boys' High merged in 1947 to become coed Grady High School.

<sup>45</sup> Robert Lipshutz (1921-2010) was an American attorney who served as White House Counsel to President Jimmy Carter from 1977 to 1979. He played a backchannel role in the negotiations between Egypt and Israel that led to the signing of the Camp David Accords in 1978.

**Alvin:** Well, academic . . . I'll tell you another one who was in that Top Hat Club was Billy Schwartz<sup>46</sup>. I don't know if you knew Billy or not. Billy was . . .you made me think of it . . . he was at Druid Hills also. No, academically, I would say that academically we mostly usually wound up a little above average. They usually were a little bit more of achievers, striving to better themselves.

**Irv:** What would you consider your most memorable thing in your high school days?

**Alvin:** Well, it's just a matter of what light you're looking at, for example.

**Irv:** Yeah.

**Alvin:** There are all sorts of wild things. We actually wound up with not having football my senior year in high school. The junior year, so many of us got hurt that we could hardly field a team. And the principal just unilaterally just decided to do away with football. You can imagine what that did to the school. It was the right thing to do. He just didn't handle it properly. We, at that tender age, about 1936 or 1937, we decided to throw a strike. We came to school every day, we sat on the front lawn, and we wouldn't go in the building. We hung the principal in effigy, and we boycotted the cafeteria. Part of our complaint was that the food was lousy in the cafeteria, but the truth of the matter was we were just mad cause we couldn't play football. And the principal handled it beautifully. He just didn't do anything. After about three days, we got tired of sitting outside and we . . .

**Irv:** . . . Went back in . . .

**Alvin:** . . . First thing you know, we went back. A little sidelight to that, nothing to do with this particular incident, but I'll never forget it. My closest friend, who was not Jewish, since is deceased, got all fired up with the principal. He couldn't agree on anything with the principal from that day on. As we got to Christmas holidays, just before Christmas holidays, he was still revved up over this business on football. And he said a few things that he shouldn't have. They threw him out of school. His mother and father were very strict. His mother was a Baptist, his father was a Methodist, and they were both about as strict in their religion as they could be. They wanted their children to be good students. He sat by the phone the whole Christmas holiday, and

---

<sup>46</sup> William Bernstein "Bill" Schwartz Jr. (1922-2010) was a United States Ambassador to the Bahamas from 1977 to 1981, appointed by President Jimmy Carter. He was a graduate of Druid Hills High School in Atlanta and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He served in the United States Navy during World War II. He was vice-president of National Service Industries, and president of Weine Investment, a private family investment firm. He was president of The Temple in Atlanta when it was bombed in 1958 and president of the Atlanta chapter of the American Jewish Committee.

every time the phone would ring, he answered it. And when the principal called and asked to speak to his mother, he put the phone down and disguised the voice of his mother, and he talked to the principal and said, yes, she would talk to Thornton and see if she could get him straightened out. And about three or four days later, he calls late one afternoon and wants to speak to his father, and he puts the phone down and disguises his voice and talks like his father. And his father pleads with him to let the young man come back to school. He's sure he'll do all right. And the principal says, "I'll give it some thought." The Christmas holidays were over, and he walked in the front door of the school five times by the principal's office before the principal finally walked out and found him, and told him he had talked with his parents and had a very satisfactory conversation with them and he could return to school. But the crowning blow that really got him thrown out of school was when the principal was talking to him and told him, he said, "Young man, I just don't think you like school and it's a waste of time for you to be here. I don't think you want to go to school, I don't think you like school." And he says, "Mr. Brown, that's not true. It's not the school I don't like, it's the principal of the thing."

<Alvin and Irv laugh>

**Irv:** Yup. You mentioned Rabbi Dr. Marx a little while ago. You said he was kind of a strict disciplinarian. What do you remember about being . . . were you a student at The Temple, at Sunday School?

**Alvin:** Yes, I went to Temple from . . . started out . . . I don't guess I actually went to Sunday School on Pryor Street. I remember going over to Pryor Street<sup>47</sup> once, but this new Temple was built on Peachtree Road [Street]<sup>48</sup> when I actually started Sunday School. And they heated . . . overheated the building something horrible. It was steam heat and they were very proud of it, and they just burned up the rooms. I am inclined to have horrible sinus trouble, and they just burned up my sinuses so that I came home every Sunday from Sunday School with a horrible headache and had to go to bed. I got to be about fifth or sixth grade, and my doctor just told my family to quit sending me to Sunday School. It was just torturing my sinuses too much, so that was as far as I got. Yeah, no I was not confirmed. But Dr. Marx . . . I was very fond of Dr. Marx. He was a hard man to be fond of. He was an old-school German type, who let you

---

<sup>47</sup> Pryor Street runs through downtown Atlanta, Georgia.

<sup>48</sup> Peachtree Street is a major street in Atlanta, Georgia, connecting the Downtown, Midtown, and Buckhead areas. In Buckhead, Peachtree Street's name changes to Peachtree Road.

know your position, his position, and he thought his position was much higher than your position. Marvelous speaker, marvelous bearing about him, but no sense of humor whatsoever. Everything was all business. You know, kids just couldn't quite understand that.

**Irv:** Yup.

**Alvin:** Wonderful with his grandchildren. I remember when Sonny . . . when Mary Louise and Sonny had kids, how wonderful they both were with them, but you never saw (laugh)

**Irv:** Mary Lou was who?

**Alvin:** Mary Louise . . . she was Mary Louise Holden, married Louis Sherman. We always called him Sonny Sherman. That would be . . . let's see, let's get things straight here. She was his—I said Mary Louise Holden—she was Mary Louise Marx. She married Sonny Sherman.

**Irv:** She was related to the rabbi?

**Alvin:** Yeah, and . . .

**Irv:** The daughter.

**Alvin:** David Marx, who just died recently, was Rabbi Marx's son. He was almost 90 years old, 89 years old, died a few weeks ago. Just a little over a month ago. And their daughter married Louis Sherman, which we always called Sonny Sherman. He was great with them. And Dr. Marx was just, you know, he was a pillar in the community. He always spoke about what was right. He was a great spokesman for the Jewish community, and he was very highly respected by all the ministers around town and the citizens of the town. But he was just . . . to us, he was a strict old school teacher.

**Irv:** Did you attend services very often?

**Alvin:** Oh, yeah. He put me to sleep pretty well.

**Irv:** Was it true that there were Sunday services, Sunday morning services?

**Alvin:** Yeah.

**Irv:** They didn't have them on Friday night, or they did?

**Alvin:** I couldn't tell you, cause you're straining me now. Whether there were any Friday night services or not, I thought there were some Friday night services. But I couldn't . . . I don't remember going to Friday night service because I was usually playing basketball on Friday night.

**Irv:** Do you have a feeling, Alvin, or describe to me . . . was there any kind of a community spirit in The Temple at the time?

**Alvin:** Yeah, it was a good feeling at The Temple. A good feeling in that people were proud to be a member of The Temple, and nobody ever thought anything derogatory about you if you were a member of the Temple. Oh, a few radicals around here, you know, you run into those anywhere you go. The fact that you're Jewish, some people just say things against you, but The Temple had a real good name. The members all felt good being a member of The Temple because everybody looked up to The Temple as an outstanding Jewish congregation. And God knows we had a wonderful physical facility there. Just watching that building be built was a lot of fun.

**Irv:** Do you remember when Rabbi Marx left, or did he die before he left The Temple?

**Alvin:** No.

**Irv:** He was replaced by Rabbi Rothschild<sup>49</sup>, wasn't he?

**Alvin:** Rothschild, yeah. I'm a blank. I'm sure he was . . . no, he lived. Oh, sure he lived. He married my sister.

**Irv:** Who married your sister? Oh, you mean he did the ceremony?

**Alvin:** Yeah, sorry, my sister, yeah. Because even after Jack Rothschild took over, yeah, he lived a number of years. And my sister preferred that he do the ceremony.

**Irv:** Did you notice a change in The Temple under Rothschild as compared to Marx?

**Alvin:** Yeah, they were completely different people. The Temple was a little more of a relaxed place, a little more of a center of fun. It was all serious business when Dr. Marx was around. I mean, I don't mean there wasn't some (unintelligible. . . levity? T1-S1-02 12:56) but not in his presence. He just wasn't made that way.

**Irv:** What kind of a relationship was there between The Temple group and the Standard Club members?

**Alvin:** The Temple group and Standard Club--in the old days--were almost synonymous. As years went on, nothing's synonymous any more. Most of the . . . you had a few . . . once we moved out to Brookhaven [Georgia]<sup>50</sup>, the Standard Club . . . more non-Temple members started

---

<sup>49</sup> Rabbi Jacob Rothschild was rabbi of the city's oldest Reform congregation, the Temple, in Atlanta, Georgia from 1946 until his death in 1973 from a heart attack. He forged close relationships with the city's Christian clergy and distinguished himself as a charismatic spokesperson for civil rights.

<sup>50</sup> Brookhaven is a city in the northeast suburbs of Atlanta that incorporated in 2012. Historic Brookhaven is the historic residential neighborhood that surrounds the Capital City Country Club.

to become members of Standard Club. When it was on Ponce de Leon [Avenue]<sup>51</sup>, practically everybody in the Standard Club was a Temple member.

**Irv:** There was an influx of Eastern European Jews. Do you recall that as you were growing up?

**Alvin:** Mm-hm.

**Irv:** Well, what was . . .

**Alvin:** My mother . . . I really wasn't fair to her when you asked about activities. One of the things she worked hardest at and got the most satisfaction out of, she met every Wednesday night at the Standard Club on Ponce de Leon with these people that escaped from Europe, and tried to help them, teaching them English, and . . .

**Irv:** What years would those have been?

**Alvin:** Been in the 1930s.

**Irv:** In the 1930s. When the Hitler<sup>52</sup> thing began to pop up?

**Alvin:** Many of those people . . . most of them are all dead or dying out now, but I run into people . . . I just remembered his name, but I didn't know it to call their names who would stop me on the street and would just tell me what a difference it made, what Mother and these other ladies did every Wednesday night with them, try to help them with the language, help them with the customs in town.

**Irv:** Mm-hm.

**Alvin:** And it's really sort of gratifying. I had a man live on our street, and I doubt if you had any reason to ever meet him, but a fellow named Max Metzler. His wife is still alive in that Jewish Home. I know they went through hell over there, but they got out somehow. He worked for the old Marcus clothing store downtown, just as a salesman. She worked doing alterations. And they saved a high percentage of every penny they made every week. They struggled to live, to save some money. He worked all before the war, early part of the war, and during the war. And shortly after World War Two<sup>53</sup>, he opened his own men's clothing store. And at one time,

---

<sup>51</sup> Ponce de Leon Avenue, often simply called "Ponce," provides a link between Atlanta, Decatur, Clarkston, and Stone Mountain, Georgia.

<sup>52</sup> Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) was a German politician who was the leader of the Nazi Party, Chancellor of Germany from 1933 to 1945, and Führer ("leader") of Nazi Germany from 1934 to 1945. As dictator of Nazi Germany, he initiated World War II in Europe with the invasion of Poland in September 1939 and was a central figure of the Holocaust.

<sup>53</sup> World War II (often abbreviated to WWII or WW2), also known as the Second World War, was a global war that lasted from 1939 to 1945, although related conflicts began earlier. It involved the vast majority of the world's

he had about five of them scattered around town. As Max started cutting back, he gradually sold off some of his stores, he moved on the street where I lived. He knew I was a big supporter of Jimmy Carter<sup>54</sup>, and I kept filling him with information on Jimmy Carter. When Jimmy was running for re-election, I went to him and asked him if they would give 2,000 dollars for a party out at Charlie Kirbo's<sup>55</sup> one night. And Max still . . . he'd gotten rid of a lot of his German accent but . . .

**Irv:** And what was his last name?

**Alvin:** Max Metzel.

**Irv:** Metzel.

**Alvin:** M-E-T-Z-E-L. And Max said, "I'll make a deal with you. I'll give you the 2,000 dollars if you'll take me." Cause Kirbo's farm was way out beyond Crabapple<sup>56</sup>. It was way out in the middle of nowhere. So I . . . for that 2,000 dollar donation, I delivered him to the party and brought him home.

**Irv:** Good. Very good.

**Alvin:** But he was . . . I'd never known anybody so proud to give that money to President Carter.

**Irv:** What was your perception of the community of Eastern European Jews and obviously the German Jews that were primarily The Temple group? Was there any kind of a difficulty?

**Alvin:** I didn't . . . I wasn't perceptive enough to sense it. The main thing that I saw when the people were coming that was so pathetic to me was in some of the young people, how they walked down the street and looked over their shoulder. When they got off an elevator, and they looked both ways, and they'd look around a corner before they'd go around a corner. It just sort of broke my heart to see young people that had been brought up in such a suspicious atmosphere that even in this country they couldn't get out of it. We had a young man that had come over

---

countries—including all of the great powers—eventually forming two opposing military alliances: the Allies and the Axis. It was the most widespread war in history, and directly involved more than 100 million people from over 30 countries. Marked by mass deaths of civilians, including the Holocaust (in which approximately 6 million Jews were killed) and the strategic bombing of industrial and population centers (in which approximately one million were killed, and which included the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki), it resulted in an estimated 50 million to 85 million fatalities. These made World War II the deadliest conflict in human history.

<sup>54</sup> James Earl "Jimmy" Carter Jr. (born 1924) was the 39<sup>th</sup> President of the United States from 1977 to 1981. He was a Democrat.

<sup>55</sup> Charles Hughes Kirbo (1917-1996) was a lawyer and advisor to President Jimmy Carter.

<sup>56</sup> Crabapple is a historic neighborhood near Alpharetta, Georgia, north of Atlanta.

from Germany who wanted to go to Georgia Tech while I was in school. And God knows none of us had any money, but the kid couldn't afford it. Somebody was paying his tuition, but he had no other money. We chipped in--out of our allowances--money each week, so this kid could have some spending money. Smart . . . one of the smartest people I've ever known. Even though he was a student, he was smart enough to be a professor, and somebody just was very jealous of him. The famous honor system at Georgia Tech, anybody could turn in anybody. Somebody turned him in for cheating. This poor guy was so insulted, he said one night, he said, "I'll kill myself before I will appear before an honor committee. I have no reason to cheat. I know my lessons. I do my homework." I went and talked to several people on the committee, and they said, "There's no way we can not call him up. If anybody's reported we say, he has to come up. We don't have to convict him." I said, "You don't understand this man's attitude." "There's just no way we can do it. The school has given us" (and these were students and one faculty member) "has given us the authority to rule on these things. But we have to go by the rule." I couldn't get anybody to take his name off. Then one morning, they went to breakfast, and he didn't show up for breakfast. And he didn't show up for lunch. So I looked around (unintelligible . . . the neighborhood? T1-S1-02 18:55), and that kid hung himself.

**Irv:** Oh, my goodness.

**Alvin:** You just, these young kids . . . that probably brought home to us more what went on over there than all the stories we could read, all we could see in the newsreels and everything.

**Irv:** There was a Progressive Club<sup>57</sup>, I understand.

**Alvin:** Mm-hm . . . right over on Tenth Street<sup>58</sup>, right there. Turner<sup>59</sup> is using that building now.

**Irv:** Was there any mixing between the Standard Club people and Progressive Club?

**Alvin:** Yeah, there were members of the Progressive Club who were members of Standard Club, although a small percentage. As the years went on, there were more and more. Standard Club had a golf course, Progressive Club didn't. Progressive Club had a health club, Standard Club didn't. But there was a little more intermingling . . . a lot more intermingling as

---

<sup>57</sup> The Jewish Progressive Club was established in 1913 in Atlanta, Georgia by Russian Jews who felt unwelcome at the Standard Club that had been founded by German Jews in 1867.

<sup>58</sup> Tenth Street is a street in Midtown Atlanta, Georgia.

<sup>59</sup> Founded in 1965 by Ted Turner, Turner Broadcasting Systems is a major media company in Atlanta, Georgia. In 2018, it was acquired by AT&T and plans for Turner's dissolution was announced.

years went on. Back in the earlier days, back in the 1930s, the old Jewish Progressive Club, I don't think . . . I doubt if anybody in the Jewish Progressive Club was in The Temple and vice versa. But as years went on, there was more and more of it. An interesting sidelight: I was on the House Committee at the Standard Club, and I had a top flight chef. He did a grand job, but the members ran him away. He did such a good job; he could break even and make money, and they were always complaining all the time. We'd ask them, we'd say "What's wrong with the food? Tell us what you want corrected." They wouldn't tell us anything wrong, but, "You just can't be doing things right if we're making money." Very exasperating. Well, he finally . . . he just took it so long. He left and opened his own restaurant, made a pluperfect fortune, and then sold out to Pano and Paul's<sup>60</sup>. But who did they hire when he left but the manager of the Progressive Club. And you know who hired him [the manager] away from them? The Capital City Club<sup>61</sup>. He now runs all the Capital City Clubs. I don't know if you know Kateen? Have you ever met Kateen?

**Irv:** No, I don't think so.

**Alvin:** He's now in Rotary [Club], and is the manager of both the Capital City Clubs.

**Irv:** Great. Well, we're almost at the end of the first side of the tape, Alvin. And there's a lot of information I'm sure you want to give us. So let me stop it here and we'll turn over to the second side and then we'll pick up from there.

<End Tape 1, Side 1>

<Begin Tape 1, Side 2>

**Irv:** This is the side two of an interview with Alvin M. Ferst, Jr. It's still the 19<sup>th</sup> of August, 1992, and we've been talking about Alvin's memories and recollections having to do with the Jewish community in about 19 . . . what year would you say, Alvin, 1940-something? 1930s. You were talking about the people who had come over from Germany.

**Alvin:** Yeah, 1930s.

**Irv:** Okay. Are you about at this time ready to graduate from high school? Why don't we start at that point.

---

<sup>60</sup> Pano's and Paul's was a fine dining restaurant in the Buckhead area of Atlanta, Georgia. It was open from 1979 to 2009.

<sup>61</sup> The Capital City Club is a private social club founded in Atlanta in 1883. It is among the oldest social organizations in the South. The Club presently operates three facilities, the oldest of which is the downtown Atlanta Club. The Capital City Country Club, located in Brookhaven, was leased in 1913 and purchased in 1915. In the autumn of 2002 an additional club facility, the Crabapple Golf Club, was completed in the northern portion of Fulton County. In 1985, over 20 years after the Civil Rights Act, the New York Times reported that the Capital City Club still had no black members.

**Alvin:** All right.

**Irv:** What year did you graduate from high school?

**Alvin:** I graduated from high school in 1938.

**Irv:** Still at Druid Hills?

**Alvin:** Still at Druid Hills High. I had a little interlude in there, and didn't tell you, which doesn't make any difference. When I first . . . when we first moved to Druid Hills from Boulevard, where I had been in Samuel Inman School, I went to Druid Hills School for the second and third grades. Then my family decided the DeKalb County<sup>62</sup> schools weren't as good as the city schools, so they paid city taxes for me to go to the city school. I went to Highland School for fourth and fifth grade. Then I came back to Druid Hills when the Depression<sup>63</sup> got real hard, and they decided DeKalb County schools weren't so bad after all. I came back to Druid Hills and stayed there, and probably made the biggest mistake of my life in that when I came back there, I would have been in the sixth grade, and I stayed in the sixth grade for about a month, and the teacher and the principal called my mother in and said that I really had no business being in the sixth grade. They wanted to move me to the seventh grade. Reluctantly, we did it. I don't have any real regrets, but it was different, having to start to study and having to listen in class and take it very easy and learn. I had to go to work to make the grades from that point on.

**Irv:** Yeah.

**Alvin:** Those things happen. There's nothing you can do about it. But I made up my mind then I'd never let any child of mine skip a grade. I think you really need that time to mature. I was 16 in May and went into Georgia Tech in September.

**Irv:** Tell us about Georgia Tech. I know you're very loyal to Georgia Tech. Did you ever consider going to another school?

**Alvin:** Not really, because number one, times were so tough then that I knew there was no way I was going to go to school outside of the state of Georgia, and probably outside the city

---

<sup>62</sup> DeKalb County is one of the most populous and affluent counties in Georgia. It contains roughly ten percent of the city of Atlanta (the other 90 percent lies in Fulton County)

<sup>63</sup> The Great Depression was a severe worldwide economic depression in the decade preceding World War II. The time of the Great Depression varied across nations, but in most countries it started in about 1929 and lasted until the late 1930's or early 1940's. It was the longest, most widespread, and deepest depression of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

of Atlanta, so it gave me a choice between Emory<sup>64</sup> and Georgia Tech if I stayed in Atlanta. And I didn't have any desire to go anywhere else. Tech was the only place I wanted to go.

**Irv:** Was it tough to get into Tech in 1938?

**Alvin:** No. If you had . . . really then all you had to have was a high school education and had to take a certain amount of math and science to get in. Not anywhere as tough as it is now. Tech was a completely different school then. They trained you to be a completely different kind of engineer. Georgia Tech men were known then for solving practical problems, getting their hands dirty and whatever it would take to make things work. As a result, we took wood shop, machine shop, foundry, learned to do things by hand. We literally . . . we worked in shop and made a pattern and took that pattern to the foundry and cast it, and then took the parts that we cast in the foundry to the machine shop and machined it. And we made a quarter . . . learned to wind the motor, and we made a quarter inch, quarter horsepower motor and all the fittings to make a bench grinder. But that was three different courses.

**Irv:** Yeah. Interesting.

**Alvin:** Tech was a much smaller school then. It was tough to stay in. They would tell you when you got to the orientation that to look at the person on the right of you and the person left of you, and only one of you'd be there next year.

**Irv:** Was that true?

**Alvin:** Yeah. They would cut the class. The class would usually get cut at least two-thirds.

**Irv:** What number of people would have started the class with you?

**Alvin:** They would start at about 1,000 [or] 900 people in the class. And you'd wind up with 300.

**Irv:** So you're saying two-thirds would be gone?

**Alvin:** Yeah.

**Irv:** It's a heavy cut. Were there Jewish fraternities at Tech at those days?

---

<sup>64</sup> Emory University is a private university in Atlanta. It was founded in 1836 by a small group of Methodists and named in honor of Methodist bishop John Emory. Today it has nearly 3,000 faculty members and is ranked 20<sup>th</sup> among national universities in U.S. News & World Report's 2014 rankings. Emory University was officially desegregated in September of 1962 and admitted its first African American undergraduate in the fall of 1963.

**Alvin:** There were two Jewish fraternities then. There was Phi Epsilon Pi<sup>65</sup> and Tau Epsilon Phi<sup>66</sup>. After I got out of school, after World War Two, they put in an AE Pi<sup>67</sup> fraternity. There were three of them after World War Two. That's an interesting story in itself. There was an executive vice president of Rich's<sup>68</sup> then, wonderful person, Ben Gordon<sup>69</sup>. Ben Gordon was a Georgia Tech graduate. Back up a little bit. Ben Gordon was a Georgia Tech student. He was writing a thesis. He went to Walter Rich, who was the president of Rich's, and asked if he could do some studying and investigating around Rich's. He was trying to develop a paper on what you would call unit control merchandise. And Walter Rich said he could have free run of the store if he gave him a copy of the paper when he finished it. Ben Gordon finished the thesis, and Walter Rich was so impressed with him, he hired him.

**Irv:** This would have been about what year?

**Alvin:** About 1924.

**Irv:** Oh, so several years before you went to Tech.

**Alvin:** Yeah. And Ben Gordon had a chance . . . he came out as a stock person, worked up several levels to executive vice president, and in that period he developed this unit control system which later became known as the stock control system. It was patterned all over the country. Rich's was one of the first stores in America that kept up with every unit of merchandise and established a model stock of how many they should have and what the reorder point was and reorder. And many a top executive has visited Rich's. Well, after I was working there, they would tell me that they owed their future . . . their whole success to Ben Gordon, because he explained his whole stock control system. They installed it in their business, and that's the way their success came. So, after World War Two, Ben Gordon was working at Georgia Tech to learn what he could about electronics, because he wanted to get a computer set up for the retail

---

<sup>65</sup> Phi Epsilon Pi (PEP) was a predominantly Jewish fraternity active between 1904 and 1970. At its peak it had at least 48 chapters across the United States and Canada. In 1970 PEP was absorbed by Zeta Beta Tau.

<sup>66</sup> Tau Epsilon Phi (TEΦ, commonly pronounced 'TEP') is a fraternity founded by ten Jewish men at Columbia University in New York in 1910 as a response to the existence of similar organizations, which would not admit Jewish members.

<sup>67</sup> Alpha Epsilon Pi (AEPi or AEPi) is a college fraternity founded at New York University, New York, New York in 1913. Although the fraternity is based upon Jewish principles, it is non-discriminatory.

<sup>68</sup> Rich's was a department store retail chain, headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, that operated in the southern U.S. from 1867 until March 6, 2005 when the nameplate was eliminated and replaced by Macy's. The Connoisseur Gallery was located on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of the downtown Atlanta department store and was known for its exquisite furnishings.

<sup>69</sup> Ben Robert Gordon was born in Kiev, Russia in 1904. After a decades-long career at Rich's department store in Atlanta, he became Executive Vice President and Secretary in 1950.

industry. And Dr. Van Leer<sup>70</sup> was the president of Georgia Tech at that time, and the AE Pi's were just organized on campus. And they made Ben Gordon a member and then gave him the challenge of getting them a lot right on campus. Ben Gordon was a wonderful person, a super salesman. He went to Van Leer and he sold Van Leer on them buying a lot from the school, which is directly across Third Street from the Athletic Association, and which was supposedly protected property for the school to expand that way. But once Ben sold Van Leer on it, Van Leer had given it . . . sold it to them, there was nothing they could do about it. That's how AE Pi got to be at that location.

**Irv:** Was Gordon successful in getting a computer set up for Rich's?

**Alvin:** Well, what he did, he wound up being the head of a . . .we were . . .Rich's was a member of a whole group of stores called Associated Merchandising Corporation [AMC]. And he was chairman of the Electronics Committee for AMC. And nobody was making anything that could do the job. For better or worse, they selected RCA [Radio Corporation of America]<sup>71</sup> to work with, and RCA made one computer, the BIZMAC computer<sup>72</sup>, business machine.

**Irv:** Business Machine.

**Alvin:** You know, it was back in the days of vacuum tube computers, and it was so complicated. They put it in (unintelligible...shows? T1-S2-01 8:40) and played with it for about three years and finally gave up. By then, Rem-rand [Remington Rand]<sup>73</sup>, IBM<sup>74</sup>, NCR<sup>75</sup>, everybody was trying to get into electronics business. When AMC pulled out of the project with RCA, RCA then just went to a one standard frame computer which they did very well with. Actually, Georgia Tech men sold most of them for them in Europe. But then Sarnoff<sup>76</sup> decided

---

<sup>70</sup> Blake Ragsdale Van Leer (1893-1956) was an engineer and president of Georgia Institute of Technology from 1944 to 1956.

<sup>71</sup> RCA Corporation, originally called the Radio Corporation of America, was founded in 1919 and headquartered in New York, New York. It became a major electronics company before it was acquired and dissolved by General Electric in 1986.

<sup>72</sup> The RCA BIZMAC computer was a vacuum tube computer manufactured by RCA in the late 1950s and early 1960s. It was used primarily for inventory control systems.

<sup>73</sup> Remington Rand was a business machine manufacturer formed in 1927. It made typewriters early computers, and more. Remington Rand merged with Sperry in 1955.

<sup>74</sup> International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) is a major information technology company founded in 1911 and headquartered in Armonk, New York.

<sup>75</sup> NCR Corporation, formerly called the National Cash Register, is a technology company founded in 1884. It was based in Dayton, Ohio until 2009, when it moved to Gwinnett County, Georgia.

<sup>76</sup> David Sarnoff (1891-1971) was a businessman influential in the early days of radio and television. He was born in Uzlyany, Russia, and moved to the United States as a child. He worked as executive at RCA Corporation for 50 years.

he'd get out of the computer business. That was the end of the computer business for him, but the program served a great purpose even though they were ahead of the time. They just couldn't economically get the kind of equipment they wanted then. It served its purpose in educating all those store principals . . . executives on what you had to do, the disciplines you had to establish to make something like that work.

**Irv:** Yeah. Let's go back to Georgia Tech. You've entered in 1938.

**Alvin:** Yes.

**Irv:** You talked about being an industrial engineer.

**Alvin:** Well, when I went to Tech, I didn't know what I wanted to be. And I enrolled as a Mechanical Engineer because I thought that Mechanical Engineering was really the basis for all engineering, and I wasn't sure what I wanted to be. I thought I'd take Mechanical Engineering. I went through three years Mechanical Engineering before I woke up to the fact that I really did want to be an Industrial Engineer. All this association with manufacturing all my life, that's really what I wanted to get into. Rensselaer Polytechnic<sup>77</sup>, Troy . . .

**Irv:** Troy, New York?

**Alvin:** Yeah . . . Penn State<sup>78</sup>, and Cal Tech<sup>79</sup> were the only three schools in the country who were giving a degree in Industrial Engineering. I wasn't about to change schools at the end of three years and lose half my credits. So I stayed at Tech and I took two years of Industrial Management in a year and a half. I fashioned my own Industrial Engineering course, merging Mechanical Engineering and Industrial Management. I went to work for the Philco Corporation<sup>80</sup> in Philadelphia [Pennsylvania]<sup>81</sup> when I got out of school as an Industrial Engineer.

**Irv:** Okay. 1938 you entered. You would have graduated in 1942?

**Alvin:** I graduated February of 1943, switching courses.

---

<sup>77</sup> Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) is a private research university in Troy, New York, with additional campuses in Hartford and Groton, Connecticut.

<sup>78</sup> Pennsylvania State University, often referred to as Penn State, is a public research university. It was founded in 1855 as Farmer's High School of Pennsylvania, and has expanded since. Its flagship campus is in State College, Pennsylvania, though it has several campuses in Pennsylvania, as well as an online program.

<sup>79</sup> The California Institute of Technology, often referred to as Caltech, is a private research institute located in Pasadena, California. It was established in 1891.

<sup>80</sup> Philco Corporation was an electronics manufacturing company founded in 1892 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. They made batteries, radios, televisions, home appliances, and more. In the 1960s, it was bought by Ford and later General Telephone and Electric. Currently, Philco is owned by Phillips (2019).

<sup>81</sup> Philadelphia, Pennsylvania is the largest city in the northeastern state of Pennsylvania in the United States. It is located along the Delaware River, which forms the state's eastern border with New Jersey.

**Irv:** Okay. Well, that was during the war.

**Alvin:** Yeah.

**Irv:** Did the military enter your life at that point?

**Alvin:** I was in ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps]<sup>82</sup>, and I in fact. . . have very bad eyes and I could not get into Advanced ROTC, and I didn't get permission. While I was working at Philco in Philadelphia, I got a call from the Navy. They had heard somehow, got some input from someone . . . young engineers in Philadelphia and they were looking for aircraft maintenance officers. They wanted to make me an aircraft maintenance officer. I went through all the physical, and when they asked me to read the eye chart, my nose hit the wall, and they said, "You go back to your job, man." He says, "Nobody in service is going to have you. You're doing a good job in defense agency; stay there." Three months later I was drafted.

**Irv:** Into the Army?

**Alvin:** Well, that was an interesting story too. I had listened to a lot of people that had been drafted, and found out you never got what you asked for. I went through the whole induction thing, and there was a Marine colonel there, and there was a Navy captain and an Army colonel. And the Marine says, "We're looking for some young engineers in the Marine Corps. How would you like to be in the Marine Corps?" I thought about it, and I remembered that I would really like to be in the Seabees<sup>83</sup>. I turned to the Army colonel and said, "I think I'd like to be an army engineer," and with that the Navy captain said, "You're in the Seabees." I went in as a big apprentice seaman, and I got a couple months training at Williamsburg, Virginia<sup>84</sup>, a couple months training at Rhode Island outside of Davisville<sup>85</sup>, and shipped overseas immediately.

**Irv:** Where did you go overseas?

---

<sup>82</sup> The Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) is a college-based program for training commissioned officers of the United States Armed Forces. ROTC officers serve in all branches of the United States armed forces. Army ROTC students who receive scholarships are obligated to fulfill a service commitment after graduation.

<sup>83</sup> The Seabees were construction battalions in the United States Navy. The name comes from the initials of 'Construction Battalion' (C-B). They went in with the invasion forces and built bases, roads and airstrips among many other jobs. They often did this under enemy fire. More than 325,000 men served in the Seabees, fighting on six continents in the Pacific.

<sup>84</sup> Williamsburg, Virginia is a city in the U.S. state of Virginia. It was founded in 1932 as a colony nearby Jamestown and Yorktown. It is home to the College of William & Mary and Colonial Williamsburg, a historic-reenactment tourist destination.

<sup>85</sup> Davisville, Rhode Island is a village in North Kingstown in the U.S. state of Rhode Island. It was a U.S. Navy Base and home to the Seabees until its decommission in 1994, and has been subject to redevelopment efforts since.

**Alvin:** That was the most ridiculous night I ever spent in my life. We trained the whole time with carbines<sup>86</sup>. The day before we were shipped out, they sent us out on the range and we trained with 0-3's<sup>87</sup>.

**Irv:** Carbine -

**Alvin:** Rifle.

**Irv:** Rifles and the 0-3 Springfield, I think it was.

**Alvin:** Well, that afternoon they checked us out with arctic gear, the most beautiful blue gabardine stuff with some fabric with plastic lining and fleece and stuff and everything in it. We were all admiring that. At seven o'clock at night, they came in and told us to turn that back in for tropical gear. And about midnight, we got an 0-3 to go to the arctic, we got a carbine to go to the tropics, and at midnight we turned it back in and we got arctic gear again. At two o'clock in the morning we got tropical gear again. We got tropical gear with an 0-3. So we wound up going down to Trinidad as a maintenance unit. There's a big Navy base down there. They thought they were going lose after the African campaign<sup>88</sup>. Thought it was going to back up the Caribbean. We went down there to finish building that base, built a repair base, supply dock zone, and hospitals, everything to take care of the casualties, and the war backed up in the Caribbean.

**Irv:** This all in 1943?

**Alvin:** This was in . . . yes, latter part of 1943 and early . . . really 1944. And we won the [North] African campaign. They didn't know what to do with us. We had this big base down there. And we were on stand-by the whole damn war. We wound up converting the place to a peacetime base before we left.

**Irv:** You spent the war in Trinidad?

**Alvin:** Yeah.

**Irv:** Interesting.

**Alvin:** But when we got down there, boy the Nazi subs were just thick as flies. They'd sit outside of nets twenty minutes after a ship went through the net. If they were going to get hit, it got hit. We were catching. They were bringing submarines in there for a long time after V-E

---

<sup>86</sup> A carbine is a light automatic rifle.

<sup>87</sup> The M1903 Springfield is a five-round rifle produced from 1903 to 1949, and used in both World Wars.

<sup>88</sup> The North African campaign (1940-1943) of World War II generally refers to the Western Desert campaign in Egypt and Libya, Operation Torch in Algeria and Morocco, and the Tunisian campaign in Tunisia, in which the Allied and Axis powers fought over colonial interests. Eventually, the Axis forces surrendered.

Day<sup>89</sup>, and still finding subs in the water after V-J Day<sup>90</sup>. The Germans would surface those little U-boats<sup>91</sup> and go on an island and pick at leaves and berries to live off of. And then sink during the day and come up at night and go on the island and scrape anything to eat. They were savage when they captured them. They tried to eat . . . I saw one try to eat a Marine. Didn't have any meat so he started gnawing on his arm.

**Irv:** And this was after the war was over?

**Alvin:** Yeah.

**Irv:** Gracious. I think we skipped a little bit. You didn't tell us about how'd you get to Philco. You left Atlanta and you went to Philadelphia.

**Alvin:** Yeah. When I was at Tech, I participated in a lot of activities on campus, and it was sort of interesting that the placement officer, Assistant Dean of Students, arranged a lot of interviews and talked to people. I was interviewed for Oak Ridge<sup>92</sup>, but they wouldn't tell me it was Oak Ridge, they'd just tell me it was a project in Tennessee that they couldn't talk about. Well I wasn't about to take a job you couldn't talk about. The main thing I was interested in was getting experience. I wasn't interested in going to go to work not knowing what I was going to do. We interviewed any number of corporations. I was interviewed by Philco Corporation, and I was really impressed. They sent some live wires around. They couldn't tell you exactly what you were going to do. They told us they wanted to get us into production, to learn about production and help them make their plants more efficient. And actually, three of us who were officers at one civic organization on campus, all wound up at Philco. I was the luckiest person in the world. I got an assignment to work with some other senior engineers to develop a technique and design a manufacturing facility to produce something in mass production that had never been made in mass production before. It had always been made one at a time, and we had to turn out 17,000 a week. And we started out 92 . . .95 percent reject.

**Irv:** What kind of an item was it?

---

<sup>89</sup> Victory in Europe Day, generally known as 'V-E' Day, is May 8, 1945 marked the formal acceptance of the German surrender to the Allies. It marked the end of the war in Europe.

<sup>90</sup> Although Germany surrendered on May 8, 1945 ending the war in Europe, the war in the Pacific continued until August 15, 1945. When Japan surrendered World War II was finally over. August 15 is known as 'V-J Day.'

<sup>91</sup> U-Boot (German) stands for 'Unterseeboot,' or undersea boat. The term 'U-boat' refers to military submarines operated by Germany in World War I and World War II. The Atlantic Ocean was a major strategic battle zone. After war was declared, German U-boats began to be frequently spotted along the East Coast of the US, where they torpedoed several ships.

<sup>92</sup> Oak Ridge National Laboratory is a U.S. Department of Energy research and development center founded in 1943 in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

**Alvin:** We were making high frequency quartz crystal oscillators.

**Irv:** Was this for the defense effort?

**Alvin:** Yeah, it was for the Signal Corps<sup>93</sup>. So an airplane or any communications could just plug this thing in and it would lock them in on that frequency, and that's all. You just tune exactly to that frequency. And I worked 16, 20 hours a day. I wound up working . . . studying in this lab. We designed a pilot plant, and then I made the studies in the pilot plant to find the needs for the production facility. Then we took the old regional Philco storage battery facility and converted that into a manufacturing facility. I worked . . . got that production down pat where we were producing (unintelligible T1-S2-01 18:40). We subcontracted to Western Electric. And we were producing three times as much as Western Electric was when I went in the service. But we did some of the things that we were taught at Tech. Western Electric was spending 200,000 dollars to have a special saw made to cut the quartz. We couldn't see why they had to do that. We went into a hardware store and bought a terra cotta brick saw and spent about 700 dollars and two days on fixtures converting it. It did the same thing as that 250,000 dollar saw.

**Irv:** Well, you said earlier that it was a school that taught you how to do things, right? You applied some of that.

**Alvin:** That engineer came over from--I'll never forget it--came over from Western Electric and looked at what we did, and he just shook his head. He said, "I wish I could teach our engineers to be practical. They think everything has to be conceived for every job we do."

**Irv:** Okay. Let's see if we can get the time frame. Graduated in 1930 . . . no, 1943.

**Alvin:** February of 1943.

**Irv:** 1943. And when you went to work for Philco, right after that?

**Alvin:** Right. I went immediately.

**Irv:** And how long were you at Philco?

**Alvin:** I was at Philco just a little under a year, nine months or so.

**Irv:** And then you went to Trinidad, got into the service? Okay. Have you met Charlotte yet?

**Alvin:** No.

---

<sup>93</sup> The United States Army Signal Corps develops, tests, provides and manages communications and information systems support for the command and control of combine arm forces. It was founded during the Civil War and in World War II it was one of the technical services for the Army. They were responsible for establishing and maintaining communications services schools to man Signal Corps units on the front line.

**Irv:** Where did you meet Charlotte?

**Alvin:** Well, I met Charlotte after I went to work at Rich's. She was a buyer at Rich's. Charlotte was actually the youngest buyer Rich's ever had. She went to work as a teenager there and while she was still a teenager, she was made a buyer . . .

**Irv:** In what department?

**Alvin:** She bought in the children's area.

**Irv:** What was Charlotte's maiden name?

**Alvin:** Charlotte Boyette, B-O-Y-E-T-T-E.

**Irv:** Boyette.

**Alvin:** We met at Rich's. My sister was a buyer at Rich's. They were pretty good friends. My sister actually introduced us, and we dated for several years and then married. We've been married for forty-two years now.

**Irv:** Good. Let's . . . we've got to get things back into the right sequence now. What year did you get out of the service?

**Alvin:** Out of service in April of 1946.

**Irv:** 1946. And somewhere in your life you met up with the Rich's Corporation. Tell us how that happened.

**Alvin:** Well, I had had letters from a lot of companies while I was overseas. And Philco that I had worked for wanted me to come by to see them. They made an offer of a job, a very good job, and told me where I should be in a couple years and where I could ultimately be. I didn't have confidence in Philco Corporation. I enjoyed my work. I learned a lot there, but I didn't think they were solid enough to stake your future with. They were primarily a sales-oriented company. They weren't solid in their research. They would usually try to find out something somebody else was doing and then try to jump in and research and try to beat them at finishing. I don't know. I just didn't feel comfortable. I had interviewed all around the country, and I just couldn't find exactly the job I wanted. I finally decided I'd really rather work in the South. I was born right in the South, I knew people all over the South, and I interviewed with companies all around Atlanta and Georgia. Nobody knew what an industrial engineer was in those days. I'd go talk to somebody, "Well we put you to work with the rate setter." And I said, "I don't mind doing motion time studies to start with if that's what you need. But I'm not going to come in just to be a motion time study man the rest of my life." I was talking to somebody who I

had a very high opinion of one day and was asking if he could help me, and he had made a few appointments for me. I told him that I really wanted to be doing industrial engineering work. He said, "Well, this fellow named Ebersole at Davison's<sup>94</sup> is looking for an industrial engineer." I said, "I don't want to work in the retail industry." I said, "If I was going to work in the retail industry, I'd rather work for a live, progressive firm like Rich's, not Davison's, but I really don't want to work in the retail industry." He picked up the telephone and calls Frank Neely and makes an appointment for me to see Frank Neely the next day at ten o'clock. I said, "You sorry SOB [son of a bitch], I just told you I don't want to work in the retail business." He said, "Frank Neely knows everybody in the United States. He is . . . he was an industrial engineer just like you. He knows all the industrial engineers. If anybody can find you a job in the South, he can." So I went in to see Mr. Neely, and he brought Dick Rich<sup>95</sup> in, two or three other people. He set up appointments for me the rest of the day. I said, "I don't feel right taking up all your time. I'm trying to make it clear to you I don't want to work in the retail business." He said, "What do you want to do?" I outlined what I had done and what I thought I'd like to do. He said, "Oh, hell, we'll put you to work right here." I spent the day talking to five different people. At the end of the day, they offered me a job. I said, "You don't seem to get the message. I don't want to work in the retail industry. I've enjoyed the day, it's been a lot of fun, but it's not what I want to do." And this guy, he knows me, big fellow, he's a personnel director, and he said, "Just do me a favor. Don't tell me no." I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "You have some more interviews to make?" I said, "Yes sir, I do." "How long will it take you?" I said, "Oh, two or three weeks. Some of them are out of town. Some (unintelligible . . . T1-S2-02 4:40). Some of the people are traveling." We said I'd get back to him in a few weeks. Well, I called him in a few weeks. I said, "I'm sorry. I still haven't been able to see some of the people. Just tell Mr. Neely I'm not coming to work." He says, "Alvin, please don't say that." I said, "What are you talking

---

<sup>94</sup> Davison's of Atlanta was a department store chain and an Atlanta shopping institution. Davison's first opened its doors in Atlanta in 1891 and had its origins in the Davison & Douglas Company. In 1901, the store changed its name to Davison-Paxon-Stokes after the retirement of E. Lee Douglas from the business and the appointment of Frederic John Paxon as treasurer. Davison-Paxon-Stokes sold out to R.H. Macy & Co. in 1925. By 1927, R.H. Macy built the Peachtree Street store that still stands today. That same year the company dropped the 'Stokes' to become Davison Paxon Co.; Davison's took the Macy's name in 1986.

<sup>95</sup> Richard "Dick" H. Rich (1901-1975) was a grandson of the founder of Rich's department store in Atlanta, Georgia. He took over as president of Rich's in 1949 and under his leadership Rich's began expansion in the 1950s. Richard's mother Rosalind Rich Rosenheim was the daughter of Morris Rich, founder of Rich's. Richard changed his name legally from Rosenheim to Rich because his grandfather wanted him to. Richard served in WW!! In the US Army Air Forces.

about?" He says, "Mr. Neely's told me you're coming to work for Rich's, and if I don't hire you for Rich's, I'm fired." I said, "Tough luck, fella, because that's not where I want to work." He said, "I'm serious!"

**Irv:** Well, what finally convinced you, Alvin?

**Alvin:** I could not find a job that was really what I wanted. So I finally decided I had had some production experience at Philco, I had had construction experience in the service, and I thought I'd get a couple years of retail experience, and then I'd open a consulting firm. 35 years later I finally did open a consulting firm.

**Irv:** So what did they have you do at Rich's?

**Alvin:** Well, I came in there . . . I spent a little while just working in every department in the store, just trying to get a little feel of the store. And then they had about six or seven warehouses scattered all around Atlanta. And the old Candler Warehouse was out there on the south side of town. The government had had them all during the war, and they were giving them up.

**Irv:** Those were the old cotton warehouses on Stewart Avenue, I believe.

**Alvin:** Yes. The operating superintendent at Rich's had leased about 250 [to] 300,000 square feet of space to combine all the warehouses in. So, a fellow named Bruce Smith was their chief industrial engineer. He and I went out there and walked over the building, and we started preparing plans. Well, then the time schedule got so tight on the project that we worked night and day. I mean, we literally . . . we had an eight-foot drawing board, and we would roll out a piece of paper on it, and Bruce and I would stand in the middle of it. He'd get at one end and I'd get at the other, and we'd start drawing, and when we'd meet in the center we'd discuss it again and throw another piece of paper on and start again. We prepared all the plans. I'd hate for anybody to know I drew any of those drawings, cause we were just going as fast as we could. We got this set of plans together and couldn't get a contractor to do the job in the time frame we required. So I was picked just to see that he [a contractor] was picked to go out there and run the project. Ira Hardin . . . Ira was running the business, Hardin Construction<sup>96</sup> . . . he agreed to do it on a cost-plus basis. He wouldn't do it on a contract basis. I had to stay out there and ride herd on

---

<sup>96</sup> Founded in 1946 by Ira Hardin, Hardin Construction contributed to several major projects in Atlanta and throughout the South. At one time the second largest construction company in the South, Hardin Construction's work included the Georgia World Congress Center, the CNN Center, and more. In 2013, Hardin Construction was sold to DPR Construction.

them. And as we started getting about 80, 75 percent completed, they asked me to prepare a budget on the move from all the warehouses to this one warehouse. I did, and submitted it to my boss. We had lunch one day, and I asked him if he got that budget approved. He said, "Well, I got a pay budget approved but it's one-third of what you recommended." I said, "Well, don't ask me to do it." I said, "There's no way it can be done for one-third. You might shave some money off of it, but you can't shave two-thirds off and do the job right." But he said, "That's all they're going to give me." I said, "Well, don't ask me to do it. It just can't be done; no sense in me trying to do something that can't be done." So he took over the job of handling the moves. And when he built a chute out of the side of one of the buildings that had mattresses in it, and they just--rather than men handling the mattresses--they slid them down into trucks. Well, that worked so well they started doing that with furniture. And you can imagine the condition of that furniture when it came, and I just didn't want to look. I turned my back on it. Well, he lost his job over that, and I had to stay out in the warehouse for a while and straighten that out. It was about the time we were getting ready to start building the Store for Homes, so I came back in from that job. I was made assistant research and planning engineer to try to do all the interior planning for the Store for Homes, and then remodeling the fashion store once we established the Store for Homes. Well, that time schedule was so ridiculous. There was no way fixture people could do it. We had fixture people. Abrams just went in business; we had them do a little work. We had Womack. We had everybody around doing work for us. There just wasn't enough capacity to do it. So we took the sixth floor--that was Store for Homes--and we set up a cabinet shop. We had three shifts a day running that shop. We were literally . . . I'd bring drawings over off the drawing board, we'd detail them and bring them over to them, and they'd build them on the four to twelve shift and build them out and cut them, and then start assembling them on the twelve to eight o'clock. And we'd be gluing them together the next day, and they'd be in a finished room the next day. I never dreamed that that stuff would stay together, I mean, we were finishing things before the glue dried. But every bit of it held up; it's unbelievable. We got the job done. After that, they had spent more money on those projects than they planned to, and the economic picture didn't look quite as good as we'd been projecting before. They wanted to cut the planning office back to my boss and myself. Course they didn't talk to me about it, they talked to my boss. We had about 30 people in the office, and he just knew the job couldn't be done. He resigned. So they decided to close down the planning office. I worked two years as assistant general manager of the Store for

Homes, a nice assignment. My assignment was one, to make the store profitable; and two, give better service.

**Irv:** So you're really in the retail business now.

**Alvin:** It was about as two contradictory assignments that I ever had in my life. But apparently I decided to try them, and a few years later I got transferred over to executive office to report to Mr. [Ben] Gordon and [Dick] Rich and [Frank] Neely. They didn't tell me what I was coming for at first, and then we went through all the figures, analyzing the economics of Atlanta and everything. We built the Store for Men, 1950 and 1951, and that was my project. I handled it, planning of it, setting up and everything. I continued in that vein on . . . let's see, after the Store for Homes, that opened, I took one after the Store for Men. I took a vacation, and then they gave me the responsibility for maintenance for all the properties in addition to all the development. Then I did . . . I hired a person that I knew, Phil Hammer<sup>97</sup>, to be our economic consultant. We started . . . we mapped out Atlanta and divided Atlanta up into 11 zones. We updated that information every year to try to keep up with the economics of all those zones, trying to look toward when something should happen to the suburbs. In the meantime, we bought a store in Knoxville [Tennessee]<sup>98</sup> and had to sort of drop everything. Bought two square blocks, had to plan and build and open a store in a year. We built the warehouse underground with five levels of parking on top, and then connected a tunnel underneath . . .

**Irv:** Sounds to me like you're now a construction engineer.

**Alvin:** We got that job done, and I came back. They just kept giving me operating responsibilities. In the final analysis, I wound up running all the . . . everything but the merchandising. I ran all the non-selling functions. I was Executive Vice President and Treasurer at the time. Had everything from computer operations to warehouses and everything in between.

**Irv:** Very interesting.

**Alvin:** . . . It was a lot of fun.

**Irv:** How well did you know the Rich's family, the Rich family?

---

<sup>97</sup> Philip G. Hammer (1914-2000) was an urban economist and city planner. He moved to Atlanta in 1947 and was active in the movement to end segregation. He worked as chairman of the National Capital Planning Commission under Presidents Johnson and Nixon.

<sup>98</sup> Knoxville is a city in the U.S. state of Tennessee It is near Great Smokey National Park and the Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

**Alvin:** Got to know them pretty well. I didn't know them at all when I went to work there, but all of the executives of the store were very nice to me. I had only been at the store . . . I guess I had been there about four or five years . . . a total of five years when my father died, and they were all very wonderful to me. Dick was one of the most amazing people I've ever known, Dick Rich.

**Irv:** Describe him a little bit.

**Alvin:** Dick was probably one of the best executives I ran into, in a certain sense. Mr. Neely was a better executive, just because he had so many diverse talents. Neely was an engineer. He was a whiz on finance. He was a long-range planner. Neely was chairman of the Federal Reserve<sup>99</sup> board for this district. He was voted that for one term. He held that job like twenty years. Cause there wasn't anybody . . . they didn't think anybody in the South could compare to him. He just stayed chairman, kept extending his term. He ran the War Production Board<sup>100</sup>, for the Southeast during the war. He was on the Hoover Commission<sup>101</sup>. Went around and started the army supply distribution system all over the world, and made recommendations to the Secretary of the Army to streamline supply. Neely just . . . he was a rare one. Dick knew how to use people about as well as anybody I know. He didn't know something, he'd get a hold of the person that knew it and he'd learn about it. He'd speak with authority. And he could turn it off and forget about it when it happened and go to the next thing. As a result, he was able to handle an awful lot. He had a secretary that had been with him since the day he came to Rich's. She was a high school girl and needed a job.

**Irv:** Do you remember her name?

---

<sup>99</sup> The Federal Reserve System—also known as the Federal Reserve or simply as the “Fed”—is the central banking system of the United States. The Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta is one of 12 regional Federal Reserve Banks that, together with the Board of Governors in Washington, D.C., make up the Federal Reserve System. The Atlanta Federal Reserve Bank serves the Sixth Federal Reserve District, which consists of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and portions of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee.

<sup>100</sup> The War Production Board (WPB) was an agency of the United States government that supervised war production during World War II. The WPB directed conversion of industries from peacetime work to war needs, allocated scarce materials, established priorities in the distribution of materials and services, and prohibited nonessential production

<sup>101</sup> The Hoover Commission, also called the Commission on Organization of the U.S. Executive Branch was a temporary advisory commission headed by former President Herbert Hoover to improve the efficiency of the federal government. It was active in the years after World War II, from 1947 to 1949, and again after the Korean war, from 1953 to 1955.

**Alvin:** Yeah, Dorothy Levine. Dorothy lives right down here, Huntington Road<sup>102</sup>. And Dorothy just . . . she was a great secretary for him. She was on the phone any time he took a phone call, listened to what was going on, where she could follow up. The whole time she was sitting there typing letters like she was listening on the phone. She had one of those special phones where she could turn it on and wouldn't pick up any noise. She was able to do, you know, two or three things at one time. She'd write . . . letters would come in and she'd know what he was going . . . how he'd answer them. She'd just type them up and give them to him. Give him the letter and give him the answer.

**Irv:** And he'd sign it.

**Alvin:** But Dick was a real executive. Neely . . . Neely made Dick what he was. I didn't know Dick as a young man, but apparently he was a little wild. Neely let him know to keep his nose clean, and to do things right if he was going to be in the public eye.

**Irv:** But, when you say Dick--talking about Dick Rich--that wasn't really his name, was it?

**Alvin:** No, Dick was Dick Rosenheim. His mother was Rich. And Walter Rich . . . Dick worked in the store as a young man before he went to college and while he was in college. Mr. Walter asked him to change his name to Rich cause he said he wanted to come in the business. He [Walter] wanted somebody to carry on the Rich name in the business. And he carried it on in great tradition, to the extent that he even wore a mustache like his grandfather, Morris Rich<sup>103</sup>. He loved Rich's. I mean, he just ate and slept Rich's.

**Irv:** So how many years was he with the store?

**Alvin:** Dick came . . . I guess Dick was with the Rich's stores 50 years. He came in 1922, I think, and died . . .

**Irv:** But you remember the old man, Walter?

**Alvin:** Yeah, Walter was an amazing gentleman. He was a merchant, and he was the quality guy. He was the guy, you know, who wanted to feel the goods. He was a good merchant.

---

<sup>102</sup> Huntington Road is a street in the Brookwood Hills neighborhood of Atlanta.

<sup>103</sup> Morris Rich (1847-1928), was the anglicized name of Mauritius Reich, a native of Hungary. He was the original founder of Rich's, a department store retail chain headquartered in Atlanta that operated in the southern United States from 1867 until 2005. The store was founded on May 28, 1867, as M. Rich Dry Goods by 20-year-old Morris Rich with only \$500 in capital. In 1877, Morris' brother Emanuel entered the business and the name of the store was changed to M. Rich and Brother, followed by Daniel in 1884, when the store was again renamed as M. Rich and Brothers. On January 12, 1901, a charter for incorporation was granted, and the firm became M. Rich and Brothers Company. Morris Rich was elected president at a meeting of stockholders on January 18, 1901.

I didn't know Mr. Walter. I didn't meet him that first day. I met him (unintelligible . . . on the first? T1-S2-02 17:15). And I was working out at Candler warehouse (unintelligible. . . on the first? T1-S2-02 17:18). Frank Neely wanted to see me. I had some people coming, manufacturers meeting me up there. I couldn't leave. The secretaries were driving me crazy. I said, "I'll be there as soon as I can, but I've got these people from out of town to meet me on a problem. I can't walk off and leave them." So I finished. I got in my station wagon and flew downtown, and flying into the executive office. In those days, they had a double pair of double doors, and they had little settees in between them. Don't ask me why. I went through that first set of doors flying in to see Mr. Neely over an hour after he had called, and Mr. Walter Rich was coming through the door. "Young man, how are you today?" "I'm just fine." About that time, I was so fed up with my job I was ready to throw in the towel. "Sit down, I want to talk to you," he said, "I've heard some good reports on what you're doing for the store. I want to know how do you feel about your job?" Well, I really was about as low at that point as I'd been in years, but I wasn't about to tell Mr. Walter. I knew Mr. Neely was sitting there waiting to see me and had been waiting for an hour to see me. I said, "Oh, everything's just fine. I love it here." "Well, tell me, are they adequately paying you for the job? I understand you're working a lot of hard hours; you've done a real good job. Do you think they're paying you?" Well, I thought I was the most underpaid guy in the store, but how was I going to tell Mr. Walter Rich that when I had never talked to him but once before. But he kept me there for 30 minutes! Talking to me about me and my job. He was that sort of person.

**Irv:** That made an impression on you.

**Alvin:** Oh, yeah. He'd go around the store when we had a rainy day, and crowds would sluff off. He'd go around the store and go to sales people, "Here, take this quarter. Go up to the Rialto<sup>104</sup> and see the movie. Tell your boss I said go to the movie." And he knew they weren't going to do any more business that day. Why should the girl be standing behind the counter? Cute story, parallel to that, we had a merchandise manager that had a great sense of humor, Adolf Bryor. And Ade knew Mr. Walter had done this a lot. One day, it was pouring rain

---

<sup>104</sup> The Rialto Theater was built in 1916 and was the Southeast's largest movie house with 925 seats. It was on Peachtree Street and stayed open during the Great Depression. At one point in its history it boasted the largest electric sign above a marquee south of New York City. More than one Hollywood movie was premiered at the Rialto. In 1962, the original Rialto was torn down and a larger Rialto was erected on the same site and remained open until 1989. Georgia State University renovated it into the Rialto Performing Arts Center in 1996.

outside, and he said, the hell with it. If Walter Rich can send people to the movie, I'm a merchandise manager, God damn it, I'm going to a movie. He put on his raincoat and told his secretary he was going out of the building and he'd be gone for a couple of hours. Went to the Rialto and went to the movie. He sat down, just enjoying the devil out of the movie. In those days, when the movie was over, they turned the lights on and everybody walked out, and they'd turn the lights off and start it again. Turned the lights on, he got ready to get up, and who's sitting next to him but Walter Rich.

<Alvin and Irv laugh>

**Irv:** Anything happen as a result of that?

**Alvin:** Mr. Walter just laughed. He thought it was the funniest thing in the world. Ade said his legs were trembling the whole time Mr. Walter was laughing.

**Irv:** Well, there were some other pretty good retail outfits here in Atlanta about that time. Did you get to see much of them? Do you know how they were operating?

**Alvin:** Well, of course, everything was downtown then, except for Sears<sup>105</sup> and . . . actually, Davison's was really no competition in those early days. By their own admission, they had a president. I won't call him by name, but he was on the board of Macy's<sup>106</sup> in New York and he went up to the directors' meeting. They jumped all over him about his business one day. And he said, "For God's sakes, get off my back." He said, "I'm doing everything I can. I can't make any (unintelligible T1-S2-02 20:36) down there." He said, "Every time I try something new, those people at Rich's just raise that Confederate flag<sup>107</sup> and start marching again, and I'm licked." They tried everything. It wasn't totally very recent years that made any real stride. J.P.

---

<sup>105</sup> Sears is an American chain of department stores founded by Richard Sears and Alvah Roebuck in 1886. It began as a mail order catalog company and opened retail locations in 1925. Kmart bought it in 2005. Sears was the largest retailer in the United States until October 1989 when was surpassed by Walmart. In Atlanta, the Sears Building was an eight-story building built in 1926 at 675 Ponce de Leon Avenue. It served as a warehouse facility and retail store for Sears and Roebuck for decades. It overlooked the grandstands and the baseball diamond of the Atlanta Crackers, predecessors to the Atlanta Braves. The City of Atlanta purchased the building in the late 1980's for office space and the building became known as City Hall East. After decades of declining occupancy, the building was sold to a developer who reopened it in 2012 as Ponce City Market, a mixed use residential, office and retail space.

<sup>106</sup> Macy's, originally R. H. Macy & Co., is a chain of department stores owned by American multinational corporation Macy's, Inc. As of January 2014, it operates 850 department stores locations in the continental United States, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and Guam, with a prominent Herald Square flagship location in New York City

<sup>107</sup> The confederate flag refers to the official flag of the Confederate States of America during the Civil War. Today, it is recognized as a symbol of white supremacy and popular among white nationalists.

Allen<sup>108</sup> was a super special shop. It's a crime; you probably never knew J.P. Allen. Peter Stelling ran it for the Allen family at one time; they did a great job. George Muse<sup>109</sup> was a wonderful old man.

**Irv:** Were there any other Jewish merchants in downtown?

**Alvin:** Yes. Hirsch Brothers<sup>110</sup> was founded the same day . . . not same day, the same year as Rich's. Morris Hirsch's father started the business, and Morris took it over. Morris ran a great men's store. Marcus was another men's store, was a great men's store. Before that, there was Eiseman's. And in between there was a great store, Lou Adler's<sup>111</sup>. Lou Adler had a quality store. He had Lebow suits, you know, back in the 1920s and 1930s, when the Lebow suits sold for 35 dollars, and 35 dollars in those days was big money. But one by one, those individual merchants dropped out. But we had . . . Zachary's was a great store. Mr. Zachary, Al Zachary was a fabulous citizen. He participated in everything in town. The beauty about Atlanta in those days was that most everything was owned in Atlanta. If something needed to be done in the town, you could generally go for breakfast or lunch, decide something needed to be done, and the decision was reached right then. If money was required, they'd all chip it in, and it was settled and they'd do it. The leaders of Atlanta in those days didn't give a hoot about how it affected their business. They sincerely believed that anything that was good for Atlanta would eventually be good for their business. And they weren't as protective as people are today, trying to figure out, well, why should I contribute to this? It doesn't do my business any good. You never had any of that. Regenstein's<sup>112</sup> was a great store.

**Irv:** Yeah. Would you say it was a longer-range view that those people had in those days?

**Alvin:** Much more, and a much more sincere interest in the town; the people of the town and the health of the town. I'm sure you've heard the stories, but back in the Depression when

---

<sup>108</sup> J.P. Allen was a Department Store located on Peachtree Street and Cain Street (renamed Andrew Young International Boulevard) in Atlanta, Georgia.

<sup>109</sup> The George Muse Clothing Company, also known as Muse's, was a department store founded in 1887 by George Muse. In its heyday, Muse's had 10 stores throughout Atlanta, Georgia. In 1990, Muse's filed for bankruptcy protection and all Muse's stores closed in 1996. Muse's flagship building at 52 Peachtree Street in downtown Atlanta was completed in 1921 and served as a department store until 1992. It was converted to lofts in the mid 1990's.

<sup>110</sup> Hirsch's, previously called Hirsch Brothers, was a prominent mens' clothing store founded in Atlanta, Georgia in 1863 by brothers Henry, Joseph, and Morris Hirsch.

<sup>111</sup> Lou Adler and Associates was a store opened by Lou and Edna Adler in Atlanta, Georgia in 1963.

<sup>112</sup> Regenstein's was an upscale women's apparel store founded by Julius Regenstein in 1892 on Whitehall Street in Atlanta, Georgia. It was sold in 1976.

the city school system couldn't pay the teachers, they issued scrip<sup>113</sup>. Rich's took the scrip. And Rich's wasn't the big company they are today. But they had faith that the city was going to have money ultimately, and those teachers couldn't eat scrip. And they could bring the scrip down. First, they could just buy things at Rich's, and then they realized well they had to eat too. They could bring the scrip down there and exchange it for money at Rich's. Everything had a heart in those days. During World War Two, they had a big garrison of troops out at Fort McPherson<sup>114</sup>, and all of a sudden they had to deploy them. All the money, all the cash in the banks had been locked up and it was a time lock. Nobody could open it until . . .

<End Tape 1, Side 2>

<Begin Tape 2, Side 1>

**Irv:** This is Irv Schoenberg, interviewing Alvin Ferst on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August 1992, for the Jewish Oral History Project of Atlanta, co-sponsored by American Jewish Committee, Atlanta Jewish Federation, and National Council of Jewish Women. This is the second session. We are starting with tape two on side one, and we will now proceed with the interview of Mr. Ferst. Alvin, you said that there were some friends of your family that you hadn't mentioned in the previous interview. Go ahead.

**Alvin:** Yeah, some people were Harry and Rebecca Gershon<sup>115</sup>. Harry and Rebecca Gershon were two of my mother and father's closest friends, and spent an awful lot of time with my entire family. Myself, my sister and my brother. Harry was one of the early top life insurance salesmen. He was a member of the Million Dollar Round Table<sup>116</sup> back in the early 1930s when you were lucky if you could sell any insurance, much less sell over a million dollars a year. He was a very personable person, a person with very high moral character everyone believed in and

---

<sup>113</sup> Scrip was used during the Great Depression era as a substitute for government issued currency. Because of the banks closing temporarily and the lack of physical currency, someone had to come up with another form of currency to keep the economy going and a way for trade to continue. Therefore the old idea of local currency was reborn. Paper, cardboard, wood metal tokens, leather, clamshells, and even parchment from fish skin was used. At one point, the government considered issuing a nationwide scrip on a temporary basis.

<sup>114</sup> Fort McPherson was a U.S. Army military base located in East Point, Georgia, on the southwest edge of Atlanta, Georgia. During World War II, Fort McPherson served as a general depot, where thousands of men were processed for entry in the army. Fort McPherson was closed down in 2011. The property is now owned by actor/producer Tyler Perry, who redeveloped the site into Tyler Perry Studios.

<sup>115</sup> Rebecca Mathis Gershon (known as 'Reb') (1889-1997) was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, but her grandparents came from Germany. On a visit to Atlanta she met and later married Harry Gershon. Rebecca Mathis Gershon was involved in the life of the Jewish community of Atlanta including the National Council of Jewish Women, the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta, *Hadassah*, as well as in the Civil Rights Movement.

<sup>116</sup> The Million Dollar Round Table (MDRT) is an independent global association of life insurance and financial service professionals, established in 1927.

liked. Rebecca was a most unusual person in that she had a very good education, graduated from Smith College<sup>117</sup>, I think, and continued to further her education all during her life. She was constantly reading about things, not only in literature but things all over the world. Rebecca grew up in Chattanooga, Tennessee<sup>118</sup>, and her closest friend when she was growing up was Ralph McGill<sup>119</sup>. And Mr. McGill many times mentioned that some of the greatest insights that he got in the world were as a result of being in the Mathis family home. She was Rebecca Mathis before she married Harry Gershon. Ralph said that that had more to do with the development of his mind and the broadening of his mind than any experience he went through. I would imagine also that that probably was Harry's first . . . excuse me . . . was Ralph McGill's first exposure to life in a Jewish family. And he was fascinated by all of what they stood and the values for which they stood. I grew up to have a great respect for Ralph McGill and knew him as a result of my contacts with Rebecca Gershon, and had many an interesting discussion and many different activities with Ralph as a result of it.

**Irv:** Give us an example of your activities with him.

**Alvin:** Well, I can remember shortly after World War Two when three or four young kids got in some trouble in Atlanta and were arrested for some pranks that they did. And the newspapers just would not get off their back, I mean. It went . . .

**Irv:** Black children, white children, Jewish children?

**Alvin:** These were white children, some Jewish, some non-Jewish, from very well-to-do fine families, good upbringing, and therefore the newspapers I think felt like they had to crucify them cause of the trouble they got into. Finally, I went to see Ralph one day. I said, "Ralph, you know, I'm not going to tell you how to run your newspaper." I don't think I said Ralph because everybody was Mr. So-and-So then. I said, "Mr. McGill, I'm not going to tell you how to run your newspaper, but I really can't understand why you won't get off these kids back. They know

---

<sup>117</sup> Smith College is a private, independent women's liberal arts college with co-ed graduate and certificate programs in Northampton, Massachusetts. It is the largest member of the Seven Sisters, a name given to seven liberal arts colleges in the Northeastern United States that are historically women's colleges.

<sup>118</sup> Chattanooga is a city in the southeastern part of the American state of Tennessee. It is located along the Tennessee River in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. It is approximately 193 kilometers (120 miles) northwest of Atlanta, Georgia.

<sup>119</sup> Ralph Emerson McGill (1898-1969) was an American journalist, best known as an anti-segregationist editor and publisher of the Atlanta Constitution newspaper. He won a Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing in 1959. He became friends with Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, acting as a civil rights advisor and behind-the-scenes envoy to several African nations. After his death, Ralph McGill Boulevard in Atlanta (previously Forrest Boulevard) was named for him.

they did wrong, and a couple of them actually went to the police and confessed. And you've written on them just as hard as the ones that didn't confess, and enough's enough." He said, "I agree with you, Alvin." He said, "Let me talk to Tarver." He was just turning over a lot of the responsibility of the paper to Jack Tarver<sup>120</sup>.

**Irv:** Excuse me, Alvin. What year would this have been?

**Alvin:** This would have been about 1947, 1948, somewhere in there. We got talking. I was getting ready to walk out of the office and he said, "You know, Alvin, I just was thinking. Those kids are all fine kids, and there's not a lot of difference between those kids and you and I." He said, "As a matter of fact, there's probably only one difference." And I said, "Yes, Mr. McGill, what was that?" He said, "Well, they got caught and you and I didn't." And this humanness of McGill was something that came out all the time. In Rebecca Gershon's household, I met black people, I met progressive-thinking people, before anybody ever thought of inviting a black person into their home. Grace [Towns] Hamilton<sup>121</sup>, who later became very prominent in Atlanta, worked in the Urban League<sup>122</sup> and then in the state Legislature<sup>123</sup>, I met at Reb Gershon's house when I was a kid because Grace Hamilton was a well-educated black person. Her husband was teaching at the time at the black universities<sup>124</sup> here and their house. She [Rebecca Gershon] just died recently, but her house sits on a hill over there looking at downtown Atlanta. She always told us she looked across the river to Atlanta. But I met Grace in her house. I met Eliza Paschall<sup>125</sup>, who was one of probably the most progressive-thinking

---

<sup>120</sup> Jack Tarver (1917 - 1999) was publisher of the Atlanta Journal Constitution in the 1960s and 1970s, working closely with Ralph McGill. He later was an executive at Cox, and chairman at the Associated Press.

<sup>121</sup> Grace Towns Hamilton (1907-1992) was a Civil Rights activist and advisor, Georgia state representative. After work in the 1930s creating interracial programs on college campuses in Tennessee, she became president of the Atlanta Urban League in 1943, working to improve schooling, healthcare, voting rights, and housing for black Atlantans. In 1966, she became the first black woman elected to the Georgia General Assembly and held office for nearly 20 years. Later, she was an advisor to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission.

<sup>122</sup> Formerly known as the 'National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes,' the National Urban League is a non-partisan civil rights organization based in New York City that advocates on behalf of African-Americans and against racial discrimination in the United States.

<sup>123</sup> The Georgia General Assembly is the state legislature of the U.S. state of Georgia. It is bicameral, with a senate and a house of representatives.

<sup>124</sup> The black universities in Atlanta are Morehouse College and Spelman College. Morehouse College is a private, all-male, liberal arts, historically black college in Atlanta, Georgia. Spelman College is a liberal arts women's college in Atlanta. It was founded in 1881 as the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary, and is one of America's oldest historically black colleges for women. Spelman received its charter in 1924.

<sup>125</sup> Eliza King Paschall was born in 1917. She was active in civic, interracial and women's organizations in which she held several offices including executive director of the Greater Atlanta Council on Human Relations (1961-1967), president of the Georgia League of Women Voters (1955-1957), and national secretary of the National

women in Atlanta, a white woman, in Reb Gershon's house. She attracted the brains; she wanted to further her own thinking. Harry Gershon died when he was 40 or 42 years old from Hodgkin's disease. I slept in their home the night she sat in the hospital with him when he died. One of the eeriest feelings in my life as a young kid, sitting in a house knowing a person I'd revered all my life . . .

**Irv:** What year did he die, Alvin?

**Alvin:** He died about 1935 or 1936.

**Irv:** So you were relatively young at that time.

**Alvin:** And I sat there on the telephone taking phone calls from these people that would call and find out about him. Me, a little kid, not knowing whether to tell them, well I didn't think he'd live through the night because I didn't know whether I had a right to say that even though I'd been told that. People . . . it was interesting, the people who called that night. That was the beginning of . . . the early part of the period when some of the people escaped from Nazi Germany were coming over. I cannot remember, I'm ashamed to say, I can't remember the man's name who wrote a book, *Barbed-wire Surgeon*<sup>126</sup>, a doctor who came here. But he called that night. His wife called. All these people that Reb had befriended, new to town as well as the oldest citizens of the town, calling to find out about Harry. They just were rare people, way ahead of their time.

**Irv:** But you said he was an insurance salesman. Did he have affiliation with any organizations, with clubs, societies or anything of that sort?

**Alvin:** Yes. He was . . . primarily was working in the business community with the national Round Table for the Million Dollar Round Table. He was one of two people in Atlanta, I think at the time, that were members of the Million Dollar Round Table in the whole state of Georgia. He was active in those things. I think he was active in B'nai B'rith<sup>127</sup>. Reb was president of the Council of Jewish Women, both for Atlanta and for the Southern Regional. And Rebecca

---

Organization of Women. She authored *It Must Have Rained* (1974), which concerned civil rights in Atlanta, Georgia. She married Walter Goode Paschall (c. 1959) in 1945.

<sup>126</sup> *Barbed-wire Surgeon* is a 1948 memoir written by Alfred Abraham Weinstein, M.D., chronicling his experiences as a prisoner of war in Japan during World War II.

<sup>127</sup> B'nai B'rith International (Hebrew: 'Children of the Covenant') is the oldest Jewish service organization in the world. B'nai B'rith states that it is committed to the security and continuity of the Jewish people and the State of Israel and combating antisemitism and bigotry. Its mission is to unite persons of the Jewish faith and to enhance Jewish identity through strengthening Jewish family life, to provide broad-based services for the benefit of senior citizens, and to facilitate advocacy and action on behalf of Jews throughout the world.

was involved in everything. League of Women Voters, you name it, anything that a woman could get involved in. Sometimes she stuck her nose into things that women hadn't been involved in.

**Irv:** You called her Reb, and I presume that's not rebel, that's Rebecca.

**Alvin:** Rebecca. But Rebecca lived until about, oh . . . about four years ago.

**Irv:** So she remained a very close friend of your family during the whole time that you knew her?

**Alvin:** Very true, and she outlived them all. But she was the kind of person that she studied up. After Harry died, she studied up about various parts of the world, and she planned her own trips. First to South America and Mexico, then to Europe, then to Russia. And she was one of the first people I ever knew to go inside of Russia not too long after World War Two, when Americans were afraid to death to be over there. But she somehow had a way of getting along anywhere in the world, primarily on her brain power and her charm too. Enough said about them.

**Irv:** Okay. When I entered the room not too long ago, Alvin, you were looking over your family tree. And it occurred to me that in our first interview, we really didn't talk much about your grandparents. We talked about where your parents had met. If I recall correctly, your father had met your mother in Charleston [South Carolina].

**Alvin:** Correct.

**Irv:** When he was at the naval yard.

**Alvin:** Right.

**Irv:** Was he in the service then, Alvin?

**Alvin:** Yes, he was in the Navy at the time. And the Weil family . . . let's back up. My father's father was Aaron Ferst, and he was married to Ida Weil. The Weil family came from Mannheim, Germany<sup>128</sup>.

**Irv:** What . . . the spelling on Weil?

**Alvin:** W-E-I-L.

**Irv:** W-E-I-L.

**Alvin:** They came from Mannheim, Germany, and settled in Savannah [Georgia] way, way back.

**Irv:** Have any idea about what year it might have been?

---

<sup>128</sup> Mannheim is a city in the southwestern part of Germany.

**Alvin:** That particular date we don't know. Someone wrote down that they arrived in this country shortly before the beginning of the war.

**Irv:** Of the Civil War<sup>129</sup>?

**Alvin:** It would have to have been the Civil War, but they . . . the Weils started in Savannah. The Ferst family also came from Germany and settled in Savannah.

**Irv:** You remember what part of Germany they would have come from?

**Irv:** I should know the name where the Ferst family came from. It just won't come to me now.

**Irv:** Now these would have been your grandparents coming to the United States before the Civil War?

**Alvin:** Right. My Grandfather [Aaron] Ferst had a wholesale business in Savannah. I gather it was general wholesale to begin with but wound up being more wholesale produce later. I don't know what the Weil family started out other than I know they started the temple in Savannah<sup>130</sup> because I visited Savannah years ago and was amazed to see all the Weils listed on the group that formed the temple in Savannah. It was on a brass plaque in there. The Ferst . . . there were a whole raft of Ferst children. One son died at birth. The second one either died or was killed in World War Two, that was Harold. Monie was the next oldest. My father, Alvin Sr., was the next oldest. And then there came Leon, a daughter named Mazie, and then Frank.

**Irv:** What was it that attracted them to Atlanta from Savannah?

**Alvin:** Well, I think there was just much greater opportunities in Atlanta. Both Frank and Monie went to Georgia Tech. I think Harold attended Tech for a short while before he went in

---

<sup>129</sup> The American Civil War, widely known in the United States as the 'Civil War' or the 'War Between the States,' was fought from 1861 to 1865 to determine the survival of the Union or independence for the Confederacy. In January 1861, seven Southern slave states declared their secession from the United States and formed the Confederate States of America. The Confederacy, often called the 'South,' grew to include 11 states, and although they claimed 13 states and additional western territories, no foreign countries ever diplomatically recognized the Confederacy. The states that did not declare secession were known as the 'Union' or the 'North.' The war had its origin in the issue of slavery. After four years of bloody combat, which left over 600,000 Union and Confederate soldiers dead and destroyed much of the South's infrastructure, the Confederacy collapsed, slavery was abolished, and the difficult Reconstruction process of restoring national unity and granting civil rights to freed slaves began.

<sup>130</sup> Mickve Israel in Savannah, Georgia is one of the oldest congregations in the United States. Sephardic immigrants from London who arrived in the new colony in 1733 originally organized it. The original synagogue was granted a charter in 1799 by General James Edward Oglethorpe, who established the colony of Georgia for England in 1732. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century it began to shift to Reform Judaism. The current building was consecrated in 1858. The actual synagogue building was built on a plot of land given to the congregation by the city of Savannah. The cemetery, however, was established in 1733 on a plot of land given to the congregation by James Oglethorpe in the name of King George III.

the service. I think they got exposed to Atlanta. As it turns out, both Monie and Frank married Atlanta girls. Monie married Helen Montag and Frank married Sylvia Montag.

**Irv:** Were they sisters?

**Alvin:** First cousins.

**Irv:** They were first cousins.

**Alvin:** Sylvia and Helen were first cousins. Amazingly enough, Aunt Helen is still alive at the tender age of 100. And until the last couple of years, she was moving around and active and her mind was just as clear as it could be.

**Irv:** So what years would that have been that your two uncles came to Atlanta to go to Georgia Tech?

**Alvin:** Monie graduated in 1911, so it means he probably came about 1905 or 1906. Frank went to the University of Georgia a year and then to Tech for four years, so I guess he came . . . I don't know whether he finished his last year in 1922 or 1923 at Tech. He came up somewhere around 1917 or 1918. And my father and mother came here shortly after they were married, which, they married in 1918.

**Irv:** Well your family . . . at least part of your family was probably here during the Leo Frank<sup>131</sup> period. Do you as a youngster remember hearing anything from them about it, or did you feel any backlash or any pressure as a result of what happened during that period?

**Alvin:** I didn't feel any. I guess as the years went on and you learned more and more about it . . . you know, you didn't have the coverage in the media that you have today. By the time they had gone through that over and over again on television as many times as they have now, it's thrown it all out of proportion. But the business that . . . where the murder occurred was a pencil business, and Monie happened to be in the pencil business, so that brought up a lot of discussion. I was too young to, you know, have any comprehension of it then. And later on . . . it's really only been since after World War Two that it's gotten the prominence and the play that

---

<sup>131</sup> Leo M. Frank (1884-1915) was a Jewish factory superintendent in Atlanta, Georgia. In 1913, he was accused of raping and murdering one of his employees, a 13-year-old girl named Mary Phagan, whose body was found on the premises of the National Pencil Company. Frank was arrested, tried, convicted and sentenced to death for her murder. The trial was the catalyst for a great outburst of antisemitism led by the populist Tom Watson and the center of powerful class and political interests. Frank was sent to Milledgeville State Penitentiary to await his execution. Governor John M. Slaton, believing there had been a miscarriage of justice, commuted Frank's sentence to life in prison. This enraged a group of men who styled themselves the "Knights of Mary Phagan." They drove to the prison, kidnapped Frank from his cell and drove him to Marietta, Georgia where they lynched him. Many years later, the murderer was revealed to be Jim Conley, who had lied in the trial, pinning it on Frank instead. Frank was pardoned on March 11, 1986, although they stopped short of exonerating him.

it has gotten. I'm sure it did at the time it happened, but . . . I think most people feel like it's . . . too much has been said about it. You keep talking about something like that like you could do something about it. It's all happened and nothing is going to change now.

**Irv:** The other event that Atlanta has received some notoriety about or been in the newspapers about was the bombing of The Temple<sup>132</sup>. That was in 1958, I believe?

**Alvin:** Somewhere around there, 1957, 1958.

**Irv:** What are your recollections of that?

**Alvin:** Well, I was sitting at home when it happened and heard about it immediately, and I went over to The Temple immediately. And when I got there, Mayor Hartsfield<sup>133</sup> was there. Mayor Hartsfield and [Rabbi Jacob] Jack Rothschild . . .

**Irv:** What day of the week was that, Alvin?

**Alvin:** It was a week night. I could not tell you.

**Irv:** But it was not during a . . . there may not have been services going on? The Temple was empty at the time?

**Alvin:** My recollection is that it was . . . I think it was a Friday night after services. I'm guessing. It's hard for me to remember now. I went over and they had temporary lights strung all around the building. Rabbi Rothschild and Mayor Hartsfield were walking around. I seem to recall Joseph Heyman<sup>134</sup> being with them for some reason. I walked around and tried to get a feel

---

<sup>132</sup> The Temple on Peachtree Street in Atlanta, Georgia was bombed in the early morning hours of October 12, 1958. About 50 sticks of dynamite were planted near the building and tore a huge hole in the wall. No one was injured in the bombing as it was during the night. Rabbi Jacob Rothschild was an outspoken advocate of civil rights and integration and friend of Martin Luther King Jr. Five men associated with the National States' Rights Party, a white separatist group, were tried and acquitted in the bombing.

<sup>133</sup> William Berry Hartsfield, Sr. (1890-1971), served as the 49<sup>th</sup> and 51<sup>st</sup> Mayor of Atlanta. His tenure extended from 1937 to 1941 and again from 1942 to 1962, making him the longest-serving mayor of his native Atlanta. It was under his direction that Atlanta became a world-class city with the image of the "City Too Busy to Hate."

<sup>134</sup> Joseph Kohn Heyman (1908-2001) was born in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1908, the son of Minna Simon Heyman and Arthur Heyman. He attended Fulton High School and graduated Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Georgia in 1928. In 1930, he received his Masters of Business Administration from the Harvard Business School. From 1930 until 1942 he served on the staff of Tri-Continental Corporation, a New York investment company, initially as an investment analyst and later as economist. He returned to Atlanta in 1942 to serve with the War Production Board. From 1945 to 1951, Heyman operated his own investment firm, joining the Trust Company of Georgia as a vice president in 1951. Throughout his career, Heyman was often called upon to comment in print and in speeches to local organizations on the state of the economy. Notwithstanding two years during which he served as financial vice president of Rich's Inc., he remained at the Trust Company of Georgia until his retirement in 1973. Heyman served as a member of the Board of Directors of Rich's Inc., and was active in a variety of civic organizations, including the Atlanta Parking Commission, Community Chest, Family Service Society, Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, Atlanta-Fulton County Joint City-County Advisory Commission, Atlanta Arts Alliance, Inc., and the Atlanta Economics Club. He was also a member of The Temple and the Standard Club.

of things, and walked up to the three of them and said, "If I can be of any help or anything, I'd be glad to." And they said, "Well, thank you. It's all happened, and we're going to leave it up to the professionals to try to see what they could figure out what happened." And Chief Jenkins<sup>135</sup> was there and all of his people of authority, combing through the debris trying to see if they could get any clue as to what caused it.

**Irv:** And you were at Rich's at the time, were you not?

**Alvin:** Uh-huh.

**Irv:** Did you see anything, feel anything in the company, in the store, in the organization?

**Alvin:** No. It was . . . not particularly in the business. It was . . .

**Irv:** It was well known that Rich's . . .

**Alvin:** It was talk all over Atlanta, I mean . . .

**Irv:** But it was well known that Rich's . . .

**Alvin:** Nobody could even believe that it had happened in Atlanta. We had always . . . we knew there were always radical groups around, but we sort of figured they were using up their energies in these little beer joints and places they were showing off on. I don't think anybody really expected anything like that, other than the fact that Rabbi Rothschild and a few other people had seen these strange faces sitting in the balcony of The Temple on several occasions at services, on Friday night services, and sort of wondered what the devil they were doing there. But nobody connected them at that time to this specific group that . . . which I can't even remember the name of the group. They had a name they went by then.

**Irv:** The reason I ask is that Rich's was known to be a Jewish business, and that was a Jewish affair, so did you feel anything there at the company?

**Alvin:** No. We didn't feel it any more than anybody else in town. It was . . . it was the talk of the town, just couldn't believe it. You read about those things happening at other places, but we just never dreamed anything could happen like that in Atlanta.

---

<sup>135</sup> Herbert Turner Jenkins Sr. (1907-1990) was Chief of the Atlanta Police Department from 1947 to 1973. He appointed the city's first eight black police officers. He was the only Southerner appointed by President Lyndon B. Johnson to the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. He joined the police force in 1931, was promoted to captain in 1945 and to chief in 1947.

**Irv:** Give us some thoughts, if you would, Alvin, on Civil Rights<sup>136</sup> in Atlanta. Anything that you had direct connection with or your observations in those days that Civil Rights was becoming a very talked about subject.

**Alvin:** Well . . . I guess, I had relatives in Montgomery [Alabama]<sup>137</sup>. And when Rosa Parks<sup>138</sup> first started her defiance in Montgomery<sup>139</sup>, and Martin Luther King<sup>140</sup> and his troops started moving in there, I was very pleased and surprised to find some of my relatives in Montgomery were standing up for Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King. Most of the town were just dead set against them in Montgomery. I guess my aunt and uncle, Henry and Madeline Weill . . . Madeline was my mother's sister, and they were W-E-I-L-L. They, being as tolerant as they were of it, gave me a new insight into the whole situation and made me think a little differently. On the other hand, when you have been brought up all your life seeing white signs and colored signs on restaurants and seeing whites eat in one place and blacks eat in another, whites in one school and blacks in another school, it's a little difficult for you to accept it right away. I don't

---

<sup>136</sup> The American Civil Rights Movement encompasses social movements in the United States whose goal was to end racial segregation and discrimination against black Americans and enforce constitutional voting rights to them. The movement was characterized by major campaigns of civil resistance. Between 1955 and 1968, acts of nonviolent protest and civil disobedience produced crisis situations between activists and government authorities. Noted legislative achievements during this phase of the Civil Rights Movement were passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Immigration and Nationality Services Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968.

<sup>137</sup> Montgomery is the capital city of the U.S. state of Alabama. It was incorporated in 1819, was the capital of the Confederacy in the beginning of the Civil War, and was a major center of protest during the Civil Rights Movement.

<sup>138</sup> Rosa Parks (1913-2005) was a civil rights activist whose refusal to give up her seat move to the "colored section" of a bus in 1955 played a pivotal role in the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

<sup>139</sup> The Montgomery Bus Boycott, in which African-Americans refused to ride city buses in Montgomery, Alabama, to protest segregated seating, took place from December 5, 1955, to December 20, 1956. On December 1, 1955, four days before the boycott began, Rosa Parks, an African-American woman, refused to yield her seat to a white man on a Montgomery bus. She was arrested and fined. The boycott of public buses by blacks in Montgomery began on the day of Parks' court hearing and lasted 381 days. The United States Supreme Court ultimately ordered Montgomery to integrate its bus system.

<sup>140</sup> Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968) is best known for his role as a leader in the Civil Rights Movement and the advancement of civil rights using nonviolent civil disobedience based on his Christian beliefs. A Baptist minister, King became a civil rights activist early in his career. He led the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott and helped found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in 1957, serving as its first president. With the SCLC, King led an unsuccessful struggle against segregation in Albany, Georgia, in 1962, and organized nonviolent protests in Birmingham, Alabama, that attracted national attention following television news coverage of the brutal police response. King also helped to organize the 1963 March on Washington, where he delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. On October 14, 1964, King received the Nobel Peace Prize for combating racial inequality through nonviolence. In 1965, he and the SCLC helped to organize the Selma to Montgomery marches and the following year, he took the movement north to Chicago to work on segregated housing. King was assassinated on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee. His death was followed by riots in many United States' cities. King was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the Congressional Gold Medal. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day was established as a holiday in numerous cities and states beginning in 1971, and as a United States federal holiday in 1986.

care what the courts have decreed, anything. When you've lived with it, you've really got to back away from it to get your perspective. Most of my friends, I would say, in Atlanta, were far more tolerant of the movement than I would have expected. There were businessmen . . . I'm talking about presidents and chairmen of the boards of businesses . . . who had been as redneck as they could be all their lives, who all of a sudden woke up to the fact. 'Wait a minute. This is something bigger than Atlanta. This is something if the law . . . this is the law. Even if I've felt this way all my life, I've got to change.' And by the same token, it was very difficult to get businesses to agree on that. Many of my friends who were lawyers, who could always tell me and knew what you should do in your business, but that wasn't what they were doing in their business. Everybody could give advice what the other person could do. When it came to their business, then they were a little slower at moving. I was at Rich's which was the big target. And Martin . . .

**Irv:** Explain that when you said "big target."

**Alvin:** Well, Martin Luther King realized that if he was going to change anything in Atlanta, he had to change Rich's. We got together and discussed this innumerable times with other business leaders. And we decided, rightly or wrongly, that the most important thing to do was keep the schools open. Therefore it was decided that we wanted to find what was the way that you could peacefully integrate the schools. We felt if you once can take that step in the educational field, then the other things will . . . follow. Well, of course, they wanted everything at once.

**Irv:** They meaning the black?

**Alvin:** Blacks wanted everything at once. There are people who were students at the black universities, never had heard of, who stepped forward in this movement, who developed careers as a result of it. We had rough times at Rich's. But Frank Neely, who was then chairman of the board of Rich's, a big, broad-shouldered man, he came from Rome, Georgia<sup>141</sup>. He had . . . fallen about ten years before and broke his hip. While he recovered, the doctor had made him walk with a cane. I think he would have been just as happy to take that cane and hit Martin Luther King over the head a few times with it. And we determined we just . . . Mr. Neely was

---

<sup>141</sup> Rome, Georgia, is the largest city in Northwest Georgia, and the home of Darlington School, Berry College, and Shorter University. Rome is located in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains approximately 70 miles northwest of Atlanta.

going to have nothing to do with any discussions. He was with us a hundred percent in what we were trying to do to get things peacefully integrated, but he had a short fuse. It took a lot of patience to work with him because what you were trying to work out doing over a period of months or maybe a year, they wanted done tomorrow. And no matter how painfully you could show them how you had to take this step, this step and this step to get it done, they didn't want to hear that. They wanted everything done tomorrow.

**Irv:** Do you remember who the leaders might have been at that time, the black leaders?

**Alvin:** Well . . .

**Irv:** Was Martin Luther King directly involved?

**Alvin:** He was, in moving forward in the confrontations, but there was a gentleman named Mr. Milton<sup>142</sup> who ran a drugstore<sup>143</sup> down Decatur Street<sup>144</sup>. Mr. Milton, Mr. Scott<sup>145</sup> who ran the newspaper, Atlanta Daily World<sup>146</sup> and I cannot . . . there was one other black man. It just won't come to me now. The three of them determined to work a little more reasonably with some of the white business leaders. And Mr. Sibley, John Sibley<sup>147</sup> who was the chairman

---

<sup>142</sup> Lorimer D. Milton (1899-1986) was a prominent African American businessman in Atlanta. He was a president of Citizen's Trust Bank, co-owner of Yates and Milton Drugstore, and also taught classes at Morehouse.

<sup>143</sup> Yates and Milton Drugstore was a drugstore on Auburn Avenue in Atlanta, Georgia. It was opened in 1889 by Moses Amos, one of the first black pharmacists in Georgia, as the Service Company Drugstore. It changed hands again in the early 1900s, becoming Gate City Drugstore, and in 1922 was bought by Clayton R. Yates and Lorimer D. Milton and renamed Yates and Milton Drugstore. It became a popular meeting place for businessmen and students. In 1960, the Atlanta Student Movement was launched at the Yates and Milton Drugstore by Morehouse College students.

<sup>144</sup> Decatur Street is one of the original seven streets of Atlanta, Georgia; it was also a famous entertainment area from the 1850s through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today, Decatur Street cuts across the Georgia State University campus in the downtown area, while farther east it is part of the Sweet Auburn neighborhood.

<sup>145</sup> Cornelius Adolphus (C. A.) Scott (1908-2000) was editor and publisher of the Atlanta Daily World from 1937 to 1997.

<sup>146</sup> The Atlanta Daily world is the oldest African American newspaper in Atlanta, Georgia. It was founded in 1928 by William Alexander (W.A.) Scott II, reporting on subjects of black interest and concern, including Jim Crow violence and lynchings. In 1934, after W.A. Scott was killed outside of his home, his brother C.A. Scott took over the paper and continued to run it until 1997. Atlanta Daily World advocated for the integration of public school and voter registration, and during the Civil Rights movement held a more conservative stance than many other black publications at the time. Today, the Atlanta Daily World publishes daily online.

<sup>147</sup> John Adams Sibley (1888-1986) was a banker and lawyer in Atlanta, Georgia. He worked with the Coca-Cola Company and the Trust Company of Georgia before serving as chairman for the Georgia General Assembly Committee on Schools, also called the "Sibley Commission." After Georgia's segregated school system was ruled unconstitutional, the Sibley Commission was designed to facilitate public response to the integration of Georgia schools, holding town halls throughout the state. Sibley himself was a staunch segregationist, and the commission provided many tactics by which districts could delay the desegregation process.

of Executive Committee Trust Company, and was a general partner of King and Spaulding<sup>148</sup>, had . . . by the time all this was stirring up and just about finished, was in the middle of a process of finishing the study for the entire state of Georgia to try to determine what should be done to the schools. Mr. Robert Troutman<sup>149</sup>, who was another senior partner . . . Mr. Robert Troutman Sr. who was another senior partner in King and Spaulding firm, took a very active role because, again, he could speak without as much direct business interest involved. He and Ivan Allen<sup>150</sup> . . . this was long before Ivan was mayor, but he was . . . he was very active in the chamber, both the state chamber and the local chamber at the time. He and Mr. Robert Troutman and Ivan Allen and Dick Rich, and I cannot remember the fourth person on this . . . won't come to me now. They sort of took the leadership on this and tried to represent the business community. That doesn't mean that the whole business community wasn't involved, but you had to have somebody that could sort of act like a steering committee. Mr. Sibley, Mr. Troutman, and Ivan Allen were the contacts with Mr. Milton, Mr. Scott and the other black man whose name won't come to me. There were other people like Grace Hamilton who we could talk through, get some perspective on. John Cox<sup>151</sup> at that time was the head . . . was the director of the Butler Street YMCA<sup>152</sup>. He was another good contact. But too much of the black rabble-rousing was organized at Butler Street YMCA to be able to make as much as progress with John as you wanted to. It took a high level of people, and the blacks didn't like it, Mr. Milton and Mr. Scott speaking for them. They were the older people, and the younger blacks wanted to just take everything in their own hands now. The real thrust of it all still has to be given to Martin Luther King and all the Andy

---

<sup>148</sup> King & Spaulding is an American international corporate law firm that is headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia. It was founded in 1885 by Alexander C. King and Jack Spaulding. The firm has more than 1,000 attorneys.

<sup>149</sup> Robert Troutman (1886-1978), along with his brother Henry Battey Troutman, was one of the founding partners of Troutman-Sams, Schroder, Lockerman. After a 1972 merger, it eventually became what is now known as Troutman-Sanders, one of the largest law firms in Atlanta.

<sup>150</sup> Ivan Allen, Jr. (1911-2003), was an American businessman who served two terms as the 52<sup>nd</sup> Mayor of Atlanta during the turbulent civil rights era of the 1960's.

<sup>151</sup> John Wesley Cox (1930-2003) was a civil rights activist in Atlanta, Georgia, best known for being director of the Butler Street YMCA.

<sup>152</sup> The Butler Street YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) was founded in 1894 and was an icon of Atlanta's black community. The facility in Atlanta's Sweet Auburn Historic District was housed in several locations until it opened a building on Butler Street in 1920 with dormitory rooms, classrooms, a gymnasium, a swimming pool, and an auditorium. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. grew up going to the Butler Street YMCA, as did other civil rights leaders in the city. Former Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young first lived there when he came to Atlanta and worked with King. The Butler Street YMCA was informally known as the 'Black City Hall of Atlanta.' The Butler Street YMCA lost its charter with the National YMCA Program citing safety issues and closed in December 2012.

Youngs<sup>153</sup>, the John Lewises<sup>154</sup>, and all of the other people that were working with him. They came in and gave us as much trouble with our . . . we closed. We wound up closing all of our food operations at Rich's.

**Irv:** What about the soft goods, the other merchandise in the store? Was that always available to blacks to purchase?

**Alvin:** In fact, we always had an unwritten policy that if a black came in a department, try to give them the best service of any person in the department. We did not want them to think he was not wanted at Rich's. We had a shoe store, a fine shoe store on our third floor, expensive shoes. It was amazing how some of these people would save . . . black women would save their money just to buy that one fine pair of shoes. There was a curved sofa built in, in the corner of the department. They always wanted to sit on that curved sofa and be fitted. I don't know whether they felt like it was more prominent or whether they felt like they were going all the way to the back of the department. I never could figure it out. They always wanted to sit there. And we told the shoe sales, you take care of that black woman. I don't care if Mrs. Got Rocks from West Paces Ferry Road<sup>155</sup> is in there, we don't want any blacks to think that they're not wanted in Rich's.

**Irv:** Did it drive away any of your white customers? Did you notice that?

**Alvin:** No, it's very interesting. You would think it would cause problems, but it usually brought a smile and a nod from the person to the sales clerk in there.

**Irv:** Well, you said you opened up the general departments, but you were a little slow in opening up any of the eating facilities.

**Alvin:** No, we closed down all the eating facilities.

**Irv:** What about the restrooms, Alvin?

**Alvin:** Well . . .

**Irv:** We've always talked about the white and the colored.

---

<sup>153</sup> Andrew Jackson Young (born 1932) is an American politician, diplomat, activist and pastor from Georgia. He has served as a Congressman from Georgia's 5<sup>th</sup> congressional district, the United States Ambassador to the United Nations, and Mayor of Atlanta. He served as President of the National Council of Churches USA, was a member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) during the 1960's Civil Rights Movement, and was a supporter and friend of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

<sup>154</sup> John Robert Lewis (born 1940) is an American politician and civil rights leader. He is the U.S. Representative for Georgia's 5<sup>th</sup> congressional district, serving since 1987, and is the dean of the Georgia congressional delegation.

<sup>155</sup> Paces Ferry Road is a major road that runs east-west across northern Atlanta. It is named for Hardy Pace, who ran a ferry across the Chattahoochee River and became one of Atlanta's founders.

**Alvin:** The restrooms . . . I can't keep the timing straight in my mind, but when this thing all got started, we appropriated some money to rebuild all the restrooms in Rich's so that when the day came that they were integrated, there would be plenty of facilities. You can't visualize the difference in the way the stores were in those days and today. We had days when we had 200,000 people in that downtown store. We had days--the day after Thanksgiving and a few sale days--when we literally had to put like traffic cops at the escalators to keep the traffic from piling up on them. We had traffic aides all over the store to keep people from falling all over each other and knocking people down. We wanted our restrooms to be ample size so when blacks and whites were using them together, that we wouldn't find a demand for the facility such that black and white might be a fight for the use of the facility and start an incident that shouldn't have happened. We didn't . . . and we wanted to have enough facilities we could keep them pluperfect clean, that we'd have surplus facilities where maids could be in there, could be cleaning those so there wouldn't get an incident started by a white person getting mad because a black person left something messy or vice versa. So we had some of the biggest restrooms you've ever seen, and we just went on a methodical program just to more than double the size of all the restrooms.

**Irv:** Well it seems then that Rich's did make a determined effort. What would you say about other businesses in town? How did they approach it?

**Alvin:** They approached it the same as we did, but just a little bit more slowly. They wanted us to . . . they wanted Rich's to bear all the brunt of it, and then . . .

**Irv:** And do you feel they did?

**Alvin:** Yeah.

**Irv:** That Rich's did bear the brunt?

**Alvin:** But I don't think it hurt in the long run. I think we got just as much good out of the bad.

**Irv:** Do you feel that maybe Judaism had an effect, I mean, the fact that this was a Jewish store? Did that cause Rich's to take the lead perhaps, to bear the brunt?

**Alvin:** Well, you know, you could . . . if you wanted to take some bouquets, you could say that. We were in that position because we were by far the biggest retailer size in town. They always want to knock off the biggest facility, and that's the reason they came after us. I'd hate to tell you some of the advice I got from some of my Jewish friends who wouldn't have to carry out the suggestions they gave. They didn't hesitate to call all hours of the day and night, tell us what

we should do and when we should do it. But it was very trying times. I tell you what. I don't mean this as critical as it sounds, but we were mighty glad to see the Commerce Club<sup>156</sup> open when it did.

**Irv:** Why is that?

**Alvin:** Commerce Club opened in 1954 or 1959. That was right at the height of all this sit-in foolishness. When we had all of our food facilities closing, at least we could walk down the street to the Commerce Club and get a decent meal. The Commerce Club was . . . it accepted blacks from the time it was organized.

**Irv:** In 1959, approximately.

**Alvin:** Small number, initially. The Commerce Club accepted blacks, and shortly after it opened, it accepted women. They accepted women before they had a ladies' room. When the restaurant closed, they had to go down on a lower floor to go to the restroom.

**Irv:** Well I know, Alvin, that you've always been very loyal to Georgia Tech. Talk about Georgia Tech a little bit, how it's played a part in the development of Atlanta, how you observed it and what you feel about Georgia Tech.

**Alvin:** Well, depends on how long you want to listen. Georgia Tech's always had a big impact on the city and the state. It was . . . the whole reason for starting Georgia Tech was the hopes that it would generate industry for the state. There's no doubt that it did and it has. At the time the school was started to the time I went through Georgia Tech, it was a hard, practical school. We were taught theory. We were taught how to apply the theory. The best professor I had at Georgia Tech was Dr. D.M. Smith<sup>157</sup>, and I took many a mathematics course from him. Dr. Smith would come . . . you come in his class, he would usually give you a quiz on what the homework had been the night before. And then he would start lecturing on today's subject. He would give you the whole theory: exactly how the formulas were derived, what led up to them, and then what examples he could show of using, and then practical examples of how it could be applied in the real world. If you kept notes in Dr. D.M. Smith's class, you had a textbook. And

---

<sup>156</sup> The Commerce Club is a private business and social club on Peachtree Street in Downtown Atlanta. Since 1960, the Commerce Club was located at 34 Broad Street in the Five Points area of downtown, where major banks, law firms and accounting firms were headquartered within walking distance. In 2010, the Commerce Club merged with the One Ninety One Club and the new Commerce Club opened on the 49<sup>th</sup> floor of the 191 Tower. Since the merger, the Commerce Club is also known as the '191 Club.

<sup>157</sup> Melville Smith (1884-1962) was a mathematician and professor at The Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, Georgia.

incidentally, Dr. Smith went, during the early 1930s, he went to Europe, to Germany, to take an advanced mathematics course. He got over there and his German professor announced, he said, "Well, all of you are learned professors but," he said, "we have to use some paper or textbook as a guide to this course. And we will use the paper prepared by Dr. D.M. Smith, the Georgia School of Technology in Atlanta, Georgia," not knowing Dr. Smith was sitting in the class. Many things happened at Tech that led this area. The Textile Engineering School is one of the few and maybe the only textile engineering school left in the country. Textile school, as far as teaching textile engineering and giving a degree in textile engineering, Georgia Tech is one of the few left. And it has a great deal to do with the whole textile industry in the South. Members of the faculty at Georgia Tech did consultation in the 1920s and 1930s and 1940s to the largest industries in America. Dr. Case, who really ran the machine shop at Georgia Tech, taught us machine shop, was a consultant to Chrysler Motors<sup>158</sup>. He actually designed and developed the fluid drive that was the first automatic transmission perfected to work smoothly for automobiles. You go through all the schools over there and you hear the same thing. The aeronautical school, the aeronautical engineering ranks with the tops in the country and always has, because they were . . . they had real dynamic leadership there. It wasn't the complete reason . . . Georgia Tech wasn't the complete reason the Bell Bomber Plant<sup>159</sup> was built here during World War Two, but it had something to do with it cause it led on to what is now Lockheed<sup>160</sup> plant out there. You can go on and on and on with what it's meant to practically every textile industry in the South; it all leads to Georgia Tech. Dr. Harrison<sup>161</sup> came in at Tech in the late 1950s, and he saw the need to diversify the curriculum. He saw the need to integrate the school. And incidentally, Georgia Tech had absolutely no problem with integration. The reason they had no problem with integration is Dr. Harrison said, "We'll take anybody in this school that is scholastically qualified, and we'll take blacks if they're not quite scholastically qualified." He held a meeting

---

<sup>158</sup> Chrysler, founded in 1925, is one of the "Big Three" automobile manufacturers in the United States.

<sup>159</sup> Air Force Plant 6, formerly known as the Bell Bomber Plant, is an aerospace facility in Marietta, Georgia, owned by the United States Air Force. Bell Aircraft Corporation began manufacturing operations in 1943, to furnish the needs of the U.S. Air Force during World War II. Today, the site is used for airplane manufacturing by Lockheed Martin Corporation.

<sup>160</sup> The Lockheed Corporation (originally the Loughhead Aircraft Manufacturing Company) was an American aerospace company. Lockheed was founded in 1912 and later merged with Martin Marietta to form Lockheed Martin in 1995.

<sup>161</sup> Edwin Harrison (1916-2001) was president of Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, Georgia from 1957 to 1969. He oversaw the integration of Georgia Tech in 1961.

weekly with the entire student body, not to start talking about integration, but it was the primary thing on peoples' mind, and he would answer any questions anybody asked. We had professional troublemakers from all over America sent in to make trouble with integration at Georgia Tech. When he answered their questions in front of all the students every week, they finally ran out of questions to ask him, packed up their duds, and left.

**Irv:** The man who answered the questions, had the meeting, was who?

**Alvin:** Dr. Edward Harrison, who was the president of Georgia Tech.

**Irv:** He was president at the time? Okay.

**Alvin:** Dr. Harrison was followed by one man for a short length of time, and then he was followed by Dr. Joseph Pettit<sup>162</sup>. And Dr. Pettit saw the great research work being done at Georgia Tech. He saw the value of building up the whole research program at Tech. One, to get the best brains on the faculty; and two, to serve industry throughout the United States. For several years, Georgia Tech did . . . ranked anywhere from first to second place in total research work done in universities. Ranked number one in public universities. That enabled them to build up the school with more sophisticated, up-to-date brains working . . . looking toward the future.

**Irv:** In some parts of the country, Alvin, there were . . . at least some people perceived there to be a quota for Jewish students, for example. Did you experience any of that or are you aware of any quotas?

**Alvin:** No, there has never been any quotas for the Jewish students or any students at Georgia Tech.

**Irv:** Were there Jew . . .

**Alvin:** For years, they gave a high priority to state of Georgia students, to the exclusion of out-of-state students. In more recent years, they've been going on the basis of the SAT's<sup>163</sup>. And there've been a lot of people who paid state taxes who criticized them for not taking enough from the state of Georgia because some of the other states have got more brains.

**Irv:** So if there was no restriction on Jewish students, were there Jewish faculty members at Georgia Tech?

---

<sup>162</sup> Joseph Pettit (1916-1986) was an engineer and president of Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, Georgia, from 1972 to 1986. He oversaw Georgia Tech's development into a major research center.

<sup>163</sup> The SATs are a standardized college admissions test in the United States.

**Alvin:** Yes, there have always been Jewish faculty members. I can't think of any period, and I've been exposed to Tech for 50-some odd years. I can't ever think that there have not been important positions filled by Jewish faculty members. I helped Rabbi Sandmel<sup>164</sup>.

**Irv:** Rabbi who?

**Alvin:** Rabbi Sandmel. He was assistant rabbi to Rothschild at one time. He was a full rabbi but Rothschild was in charge, he was second man. I helped him get a Hillel<sup>165</sup> organization going on the campus, cause he felt the need for it for all the Jewish students. There have always been . . . there were always two Jewish fraternities on campus. For the last 40 years, 45 years, there have been three Jewish fraternities on campus. I can't say that the school is absolutely devoid of prejudice any more than you can say so in the city of Atlanta or the state of Georgia. But it was never very prevalent.

**Irv:** I don't know whether this is just a coincidence, but is there a Ferst Drive<sup>166</sup> here in Atlanta?

**Alvin:** There just happens to be.

**Irv:** Is it connected with your family somehow?

**Alvin:** Yes. When one of our uncles died, they called me and wanted to know if I thought he'd like to have a building named after him. And I said, "Well, I think it would be fine. I think you ought to check with his widow before you do it." Well, they have a committee that meets to make selections and recommendations on names. They called me back . . . there was only about four, about five people on the committee. Three people on the committee at different times had called me and said they had had some discussions and rather than name a building after that person, they would like to name . . . they thought they'd like to name a street, this Ferst Drive. I said, "Well, I don't think that's right." Monie Ferst had died, and Monie had been a great supporter of Tech, and I felt like they should name . . . if it's a street or building, it should be Monie Ferst Drive or Monie Ferst Building. Well, they said the committee had already met and

---

<sup>164</sup> Dr. Samuel Sandmel was a member of the Hebrew Union College faculty for 26 years. Dr. Sandmel was one of the world's foremost authorities on Early Christianity and the New Testament, especially in their relation to Judaism, and was widely acclaimed as a leader in interfaith relations. He attended Hebrew Union College and was ordained in 1937. He earned his Doctor of Philosophy degree in New Testament Studies at Yale University. He briefly served as Assistant Rabbi at the Temple in Atlanta, Georgia under Rabbi David Marx.

<sup>165</sup> Hillel is a Jewish campus organization founded in 1923. Today, Hillel has over 500 chapters on college campuses throughout the United States and internationally.

<sup>166</sup> Ferst Drive is a street in west Midtown Atlanta, Georgia, around the campus of the Georgia Institute of Technology. It is named for Monie Ferst, a Georgia Tech alumni, engineer, and businessman.

decided, whatever they were just going to name it Ferst. They named the Ferst Drive; I told them that was Ferst family (unintelligible . . . T2-S1-02 19:15).

**Irv:** I believe on Ferst Drive there is a thing called Georgia Tech Instructional Center. Are you aware of that?

**Alvin:** Georgia Tech Instructional Center? No.

**Irv:** It's on Ferst Drive. I thought maybe you may have had some influence on establishing that.

**Alvin:** No. There's a Ferst Place in the Student Center. They called me on that. They had a little food operation in the Student Center and were trying to think of a name, and several of the students said, "Well the Student Center's on Ferst Drive, why don't we name it Ferst Place." They called that little food operation Ferst Place.

**Irv:** While we're talking about naming buildings and knowing that you'd been an employee at Rich's for so many years, the Rich Building over in Emory University is the Business School.

**Alvin:** Business School, and that started when money was given by the Rich Foundation<sup>167</sup>, and Mr. Walter Rich was chairman of the foundation. The Rich Foundation has continued to give money to organize the program of the Business School. By the same token, they endowed the computer center at Georgia Tech, which is known as the Rich Computer Center, and gave heavily to that to get that Computer Center started back in the 1950s and 1960s and 1970s when the computers were blossoming out. They have a . . . I mentioned Frank Neely the other day. They've got a Neely nuclear reactor on the Georgia Tech campus and named after Frank Neely. He went to Washington [D.C.]<sup>168</sup> and got the approvals on that, and he got the governor to give the money required for it. The reactor is just these last couple of years being put to the use he originally wanted it for. He wanted a reactor in Atlanta so Georgia Tech could use it, so Emory could use it for medical research, and for the University of Georgia could use it for

---

<sup>167</sup> In 1943, the Rich Foundation was created to distribute a share of the profits of the Rich's department store. Through the years, the Foundation has been a major supporter of Atlanta's charitable and educational life. The Foundation's purpose is to benefit non-profit organizations in the field of arts, civic, education, health, environment and social welfare in the metropolitan Atlanta area.

<sup>168</sup> Washington, D.C. is the capital of the United States. The city is located on the Potomac River, bordering the states of Maryland and Virginia, in the District of Columbia, which is a federal district under the exclusive jurisdiction of Congress and therefore not part of any state.

agricultural research. It's taken all these years for the other schools to finally get around and start using it.

**Irv:** Back in our first session, Alvin, we . . . I think you brought up the subject of Miss Daisy, *Driving Miss Daisy*. Obviously you were familiar with people that were portrayed in that movie. Give us some thoughts on the family and what your reaction to the movie was.

**Alvin:** Well, I enjoyed the movie. I enjoyed it probably for a reason different than other people. I really think that Alfred Uhry<sup>169</sup>, even though he says he wrote that about his grandmother, the woman to me is far more typical of Mrs. Sigmund Montag<sup>170</sup> than it is of the Ms. Lena Fox, his grandmother. So I . . . each time I went to the play when it opened here, and I've watched [it on] television several times, I own the tape. And, each time I look at it, I still feel like it's more typical of Mrs. Sig Montag than it is Ms. Lena Fox.

**Irv:** And what was her relationship to you, Mrs. Sigmund?

**Alvin:** I'm really not any relation to Mrs. Sig Montag. Monie Ferst's wife, Aunt Helen, the one who is still alive, is a hundred years old. Her mother and father were Sig and Clementine Montag. Always called her Miss Clemmie. And it's Miss Clemmie that it reminds me of more than his grandmother, Miss Lena Fox. But they all were quite different people than we're used to today. They were a lot more definite, a lot more outspoken. They didn't talk a lot. When they talked, you knew exactly what they meant and what they thought.

**Irv:** Do you feel that the movie really portrayed those people very well?

**Alvin:** Well, I think what Alfred is trying to get over in there was that all the people who had good servants in those days really thought of them like their family. We had a person in my family, Annie Jones. Annie Jones . . .

<End Tape 2, Side 1>

---

<sup>169</sup> Alfred Fox Uhry was born December 3, 1936 in Atlanta. Uhry is a playwright, screenwriter, and member of the Fellowship of Southern Writers. He is one of very few writers to receive an Academy Award, Tony Award (2) and the Pulitzer Prize for dramatic writing. Uhry's early work for the stage was as a lyricist and librettist for a number of musicals. *Driving Miss Daisy* (1987) is the first in what is known as his Atlanta Trilogy of plays and earned him the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. He adapted it into the screenplay for the 1989 film which was awarded the Academy Award for Writing Adapted Screenplay. The second of the trilogy, *The Last Night of Ballyhoo* (1996), received the Tony Award for Best Play when produced on Broadway. The third was a 1998 musical called *Parade*. The libretto earned him a Tony Award for Best Book of a Musical. Uhry wrote the screenplay not only for the film version of *Driving Miss Daisy* but also for the 1993 film *Rich in Love*. He co-wrote the screenplay for the 1988 film *Mystic Pizza*.

<sup>170</sup> Sigmund Montag (1864-1948) was Alfred Uhry's great uncle, and with his brothers owned the Atlanta pencil factory where Leo Frank was employed.

<Begin Tape 2, Side 2>

**Irv:** This is Irv Schoenberg interviewing Alvin Ferst on 24 August, 1992, for the Jewish Oral History Project of Atlanta, cosponsored by American Jewish Committee, Atlanta Jewish Federation and National Council of Jewish Women. This is side two of the second tape. Alvin has been talking about the treatment of blacks in Rich's store, particularly.

<static>

**Alvin:** . . . working? Came over to me the night before I was leaving, and shook hands with me and said, "Mr. Ferst, I'm sure going . . . I'm really going to miss you. I don't know how we'll get along without you." I said, "What are you talking about, Willie? You got Mr. Whiteman, you got so and so and so on, all of them have been here much longer than I have." I said, "They're all your friends." He said, "No sir, Mr. Ferst." He says, "When they come in the morning, they says 'good morning' and just keep going. When you come in the morning, you said 'good morning' like you mean it. If I need something, I know to come to you, not to come to them." There's a black man in the North who felt the same empathy that we generally had with the black people that we were close to in the South. I think that's one of the main things that Alfred Uhry puts over in that play. I don't know that the public in general gets that around the country. But I know any number of people in the South recognize it every time they see it.

**Irv:** Yes, it had some good psychological reaction, I think.

**Alvin:** Yes, it really did. It's a great job. I'm so pleased for him, to see him get success, cause this kid's been writing plays since he was in college. Most of his plays have been in some little off-Broadway theater, some little theater somewhere, and they'd last for a few weeks and die off. Maybe they'd go on for a long time on these small theaters, but he never could get recognized. And by golly, when he got recognized, he hit the jackpot. He worked all his adult career at something he loved to do. When you have talent, you're going eventually hit it. He did. I'm very pleased for him. His . . .

**Irv:** What would you . . .

**Alvin:** His mother is one of the great ladies of Atlanta. I don't know if you ever met Mrs. Alene Uhry<sup>171</sup>, but she's a great lady. And she did a wonderful job with those kids. Of course, you know his, Alfred's sister, cause you worked with her husband.

---

<sup>171</sup> Alene Fox Uhry is Alref Uhry's mother. Alene's mother was Lena Guthman Fox. Lena was the model for the character 'Miss Daisy' in *Driving Miss Daisy* by her grandson, Alfred Uhry.

**Irv:** Right. Sister would be Ann Uhry Abrams<sup>172</sup>?

**Alvin:** Right.

**Irv:** Correct?

**Alvin:** Correct.

**Irv:** And her husband is Edward Abrams.

**Alvin:** I think . . . I take my hat off to Alfred. I'm sure he worked long and hard putting that together, but he did a superb job. Course I got a big kick out of it. I grew up at Druid Hills and just to see those cars riding around the old neighborhood that I rode a bicycle all the time on. Keep trying to figure out where some of the things were taken because they twisted things around a little bit.

**Irv:** Yeah. What would you say about the attitude between the blacks, the whites, between the blacks and the Jews today, Alvin? We get a pretty good picture from Miss Daisy of what it was then, during that period. How would you describe it now?

**Alvin:** Well, it's a completely different situation as everything else is different. Number one, a large majority of the blacks are so much better educated than they were then. Therefore they're equipped to do so many things they could not try to do before. I think . . . I personally am very pleased to see it happen. There's so many good blacks that I was associated with that I tried to help all during my life. But there was a limit to how far you could help them. They just reached a point, there was no further they could go, they just mentally were not equipped for it. And the ones who are really applying themselves and really trying to make something of themselves, hey, makes me very proud to see it happen. Again, I say, you have two different perspectives. When I was a kid, I never expected anything like that to happen and probably never . . . didn't even wish it would happen, because I never dreamed it was possible. It's a horrible thing to say, but you had a very warped viewpoint at that time. All you knew was what you saw. Unfortunately, we accepted it. I think it's great to see the change. I personally have enjoyed working with blacks on all levels, and I have good friends in the black business

---

<sup>172</sup> Ann Uhry Abrams is an author, historian, and the sister of playwright Alfred Uhry.

community. Jessie Hill<sup>173</sup> and Herman Russell<sup>174</sup> are personal friends of mine. Aziria Hill and Sadie Russell have come in my home, their husband's wives, just like my other friends. I can go right down the line, any number of them. It's been a pleasure to be associated and to work with. I even walked down the street in New York [New York]<sup>175</sup> a couple years ago and thought to myself, "Gosh, every time I come to New York, I usually run into somebody that I know on the street, and I haven't seen a soul." And the next block, I ran into Milt Lincoln, who for years had worked for the Atlanta Chamber<sup>176</sup>. We stood there in front of Pennsylvania Station<sup>177</sup> and just talked 20, 30 minutes together. He was sort of glad to see somebody, too.

**Irv:** Well, sort of in the way of summation, Alvin. You saw Atlanta. You were born in 1922, and you lived in Atlanta for, except for perhaps a couple of years that you were in Philadelphia and in the service. Tell us what you . . . how you perceive or your opinion of the changes that have come about since the middle 1920s to the early 1990s.

**Alvin:** Well, it's very dramatic. You know, when I moved out in Druid Hills, for instance, Briarcliff Road<sup>178</sup>, North Decatur Road<sup>179</sup> and Springdale<sup>180</sup>, Oakdale, Oxford, Lullwater Road, had one strip of blacktop down the middle and cobblestones on the side. And that was ample for transportation. There weren't many cars then. When you see a city that has

---

<sup>173</sup> Jessie Hill Jr. (1927-2012) was one of Atlanta's most prominent civil rights leader as well as president and chief executive officer of the Atlanta Life Insurance Company from 1973 to 1992. He used his position in the black business community to promote civil rights in Georgia and Alabama, worked to desegregate University of Georgia in Athens, helped make it possible for blacks to get mortgages to buy homes and organized successful voter registration drives in which 50,000 blacks were registered to vote. He even employed Rosa Parks in his Montgomery office as a secretary during the Montgomery bus boycott. He supported Martin Luther King, Hill was active in the civic and business communities of Atlanta for more than five decades.

<sup>174</sup> Herman Jerome Russell (1930-2014) was born in Atlanta. He was the founder and former chief executive officer of H. J. Russell and Company and a nationally recognized entrepreneur and philanthropist, as well as an influential leader in Atlanta. In 1957 he inherited his father's business and turned the small plastering company into a construction and real estate conglomerate. Some of the construction projects H. J. Russell and Company were apart of include Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, the Georgia Dome, Philips Arena, and Turner Field. Russell became the first black member of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce in the 1960's, and later became the second black president of the chamber. When Russell stepped down in 2004 as head of the company, he handed leadership over to his two sons and daughter.

<sup>175</sup> New York City is the most populous city in the United States, in the state of New York.

<sup>176</sup> A chamber of commerce is a local association to promote and protect the interests of the business community in a particular town or state.

<sup>177</sup> Pennsylvania Station is the busiest railroad station in New York City, New York, and in the Western Hemisphere.

<sup>178</sup> Briarcliff Road is a road running northeast through the Druid Hills neighborhood of Atlanta, Georgia. Between Ponce de Leon Avenue and John Lewis Freedom Parkway, Briarcliff Road changes to Moreland Avenue.

<sup>179</sup> North Decatur Road is a busy road in Decatur, Georgia, running east from Emory Village.

<sup>180</sup> Springdale Road, Oakdale Road, and Oxford Road are residential streets running parallel to Briarcliff Road, in the affluent Druid Hills neighborhood of Atlanta, Georgia.

grown like Atlanta, you can't help but be proud of its growth. Some of it's been handled beautifully, some of it has not been handled so well. But somehow, the end result has worked to where we have a very pleasant city. We've maintained some of the old charm. It's a crime to me that some of the . . . a few of the old nice buildings we had were not saved. Sherman<sup>181</sup> took care of a lot of them. But there were some nice buildings that could have been kept and would have left a lot of charm in this town. Nothing we can do about it now. I think transportation . . . Atlanta's always been a transportation center. It got started because of railroads. Thank goodness Bill Hartsfield had the vision as mayor to fight, fight, fight for everything, the development of the airport. You can't visualize, when I was in high school, my closest friend's father was a regular Air Force officer. We used to go out there and meet him at Candler Field<sup>182</sup>. Believe it or not, the commanding officers in those days would take a train to the airplane manufacturing plant and pick up a new plane and fly it back to the outfit and check it all out before they'd turn it over to anybody. So he landed at Candler Field before it would be sent somewhere else. Candler Field was nothing but red clay. Had a cyclone wire fence about forty-two inches high dividing where we parked our cars and where the airplane was.

**Irv:** Where was Candler Field?

**Alvin:** Candler Field was right where the airport is now.

**Irv:** Where Hartsfield is now?

**Alvin:** Yup. It was . . . well, I don't know how long have you been in Atlanta, but the old terminal, not the recent one torn down, but the previous terminal prior to the 1950s was a big hanger that had been converted. And it was adjacent to the little terminal building which, you know, was probably a 10,000 square foot building. But the airport was just a big red clay field. Bill Hartsfield deserves real *beaucoup*'s [French: "much; a lot"] for what he did to fight for air

---

<sup>181</sup> Sherman's March to the Sea is the name commonly given to the Savannah Campaign conducted around Georgia from November 15, 1864 to December 21, 1864 by Major General William Tecumseh Sherman of the Union Army in the Civil War. The campaign began with Sherman's troops leaving the captured city of Atlanta, Georgia and ended with the capture of the port of Savannah. The campaign inflicted significant damage on the South, particularly to industry and infrastructure (per the doctrine of total war), and also to civilian property. He operated without lines of supply or communication. Sherman's army lived off the land as they moved at great speed laying waste and destroying everything around them, thus destroying the people of the South's ability to physically and psychologically wage war.

<sup>182</sup> Candler Field was bought in 1909 by Coca-Cola founder Asa Candler. Built initially as a racetrack, it held car shows and air races. In the 1920s, the site was leased by the city of Atlanta began to transform into an airfield, with the first hangar built in 1926. Development continued throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and in 1942 was renamed Atlanta Municipal Airport. Today, Atlanta Hartsfield Jackson International Airport, the busiest airport in the world, stands at the site of former Candler Field.

transportation in this city. He had to fight, going back and forth to Washington, and fight the City Council<sup>183</sup> for money to build runways and keep things going here. Frank Neely probably deserves as much credit as anybody for the growth of Atlanta. Number one, Mr. Neely had met the engineer from New York who designed all the viaducts down around Grand Central Station<sup>184</sup>, where they leveled out around there and brought everything up to level with the railroad tracks. He brought this man to Atlanta and had him develop a scheme to do the same thing in Atlanta. You can't visualize, but everything south of Five Points used to be on a lower level than it now is. And they developed a scheme for viaducts, and then they started building, first Alabama Street<sup>185</sup>, Whitehall Street<sup>186</sup> and the Courtland Avenue [Street]<sup>187</sup> bridge, and then they later built the Spring Street viaduct. Of course, Hunter Street viaduct back on Martin Luther King [Boulevard] and Techwood viaducts, they were just built back in the 1960s. But that got the roads started. The other thing Neely did, Neely went to Washington when the Eisenhower<sup>188</sup> administration . . . when the Interstate Law<sup>189</sup> was being passed, read it over and discussed it with the people in Washington, came back and got the Fulton County Commission to start buying right away for expressways and perimeter highways around this town. Everybody thought it was nuts and the county said, "Oh, we can't do that. The laws says anything acquired prior to the bill signing, you can't be reimbursed for." "Here, here's the letter. Bureau of Public Roads<sup>190</sup> in Washington saying Atlanta's the exception. They got such bad traffic problems, we'll reimburse you for anything that you buy ahead of time." Right after, Neely was the one, he was the head of the War Production Board<sup>191</sup>, he was the one that located the Bell Bomber plant out

---

<sup>183</sup> The Atlanta City Council is the legislative branch of the Atlanta City Government, with 16 members representing 12 districts.

<sup>184</sup> Commonly referred to as 'Grand Central Station,' the historic Grand Central Terminal is a commuter railroad terminal that has become an iconic New York City landmark.

<sup>185</sup> Alabama Street is a street in the Five Points area of downtown Atlanta, Georgia.

<sup>186</sup> Whitehall Street is a street in the Castleberry Hills area south of downtown Atlanta, Georgia.

<sup>187</sup> Courtland Street is a street in downtown Atlanta, Georgia.

<sup>188</sup> Dwight David Eisenhower (1890-1969) was the 34<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, serving from 1953 until 1961. He was a five-star general in the United States Army during World War II and served as Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe, headquartered in Reims, France. He was a Republican.

<sup>189</sup> The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956, also called the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act, was passed by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, authorized billions of dollars of revenue for the construction of thousands of miles of the interstate highway system.

<sup>190</sup> The Bureau of Public Roads, now part of the Federal Highway Administration, was a federal highway construction agency established in 1918.

<sup>191</sup> The War Production Board was a U.S. government agency active from 1941 to 1945, with the purpose of supervising the transition of peacetime industries, materials, and services to serve the production needs of the United States during World War Two.

in Marietta [Georgia], had roads rebuilt, ran city water out there to take care of the Bell bomber plant. During World War Two, he got government money . . . during the Depression, actually, he got WPA [Works Progress Administration]<sup>192</sup> money to come in and survey all the utilities in downtown Atlanta, locate the water lines and sewer lines. They didn't know where any of the lines were, just kept tacking on and adding on to them. He had maps prepared and located. Then during the WPA days, he got the water lines and sewer lines extended by the Federal Government, and that's what enabled Atlanta to grow after World War Two, because the water and sewer had been updated and extended so that we could have growth in the city.

**Irv:** You're saying, I believe, Alvin, that Neely and Hartsfield are two people that really deserve a great deal of credit.

**Alvin:** They do, and Frank Neely has not been recognized at all. He never wanted any credit. He always gave credit to other people. He was that kind of leader.

**Irv:** What year did he die?

**Alvin:** Oh, Mr. Neely didn't die 'til about . . . oh, about 1980. I guess around 1982. He was close to 100 years old. 95, 96 years old when he died.

**Irv:** Right behind you I see four photographs, one of whom is our former President, Jimmy Carter. Why don't you make a comment just about each of those people, and how they touched your life.

**Alvin:** Well, the one in the upper right-hand corner is Frank Neely, and he's the man who talked me into coming to work at Rich's when I really hadn't planned to, and who I learned one hell of a lot from during my whole business career, and I mentioned many times in our conversation. On his left is Dick Rich, who comes as near as being Mr. Atlanta as anybody ever has, because he participated in everything in this city. It didn't make any difference what it was, if it was for the good of the city he was working on it.

**Irv:** Walter Rich or Richard?

**Alvin:** Richard Rich.

**Irv:** This is Richard.

**Alvin:** This is Richard Rich. Mr. Walter was a different ilk. Mr. Walter Rich was the old-time merchant, and he spent . . . he was a good citizen. Don't get me wrong, he really was. But he

---

<sup>192</sup> The Works Progress Administration was a New Deal agency formed in 1935, providing millions of jobs carrying out public infrastructure projects, primarily the construction of buildings and roads throughout the United States.

did not get . . . wasn't quite as visible in the community as Dick was. Dick was literally involved in everything. I think I mentioned earlier he was aide to the Secretary of the Army, and where that's normally a few years appointment, I think he had it for about 15, 18 years. It seemed sort of ridiculous to anybody to hire anybody to succeed him. If there was a problem, they'd see if he could give them the job. He took everything he did seriously. Both of those gentlemen were real friends to me, and I owe them a real debt of thanks.

**Irv:** So you had more than one mentor?

**Alvin:** Absolutely. On the left-hand bottom is Jimmy Carter, who, interesting enough, he says he knew me before I knew him. We worked hard for him, to get him elected Governor. We worked hard for him to be elected President. We would have been on the Peanut Brigade<sup>193</sup>, but Charlotte fell and broke her leg three places, a week . . .

**Irv:** Charlotte's your wife.

**Alvin:** My wife. A week before we were to leave on the first trip. We usually got on the telephone before the Peanut Brigade went anywhere and called people we knew and then told Bobby Lipshutz and Stu Eizenstat<sup>194</sup> and . . . what was the guy's name who was his right hand then, was working on the . . .

**Irv:** Ham Jordan?

**Alvin:** Hamilton Jordan<sup>195</sup>, told them who to call on and use our name, and they'd expect to hear from us. We worked very closely with President Carter all the way. He was very nice to have us in the White House<sup>196</sup> any number of times while he was up there. When Jimmy Carter came back to speak at Tech--I guess it was during the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary--he made an important speech. He turned to a couple of people and he said . . . and I walked up to say "hello" to him and he turned to the governor and he said, "You know, I've known Alvin longer than he's known me." And I said, "You better explain that to me, Mr. President." He said, "Well . . .

**Irv:** Jimmy was President at that time? When he came back to Georgia Tech?

---

<sup>193</sup> The Peanut Brigade was a group of Jimmy Carter supporters, including friends and elected officials, who campaigned for Carter throughout his political career and traveled the country campaigning and canvassing for Carter in the year leading up to his 1976 presidential win.

<sup>194</sup> Stuart E. Eizenstat (born 1943) is an American lawyer and diplomat. He held various White House positions under Presidents Carter and Clinton. He also served as United States Ambassador to the European Union, and also has carried out extensive work in Holocaust restitution.

<sup>195</sup> Hamilton Jordan (1944-2008) was an American politician and advisor to Jimmy Carter in the years leading up to his presidency. He also served as Chief of Staff under President Jimmy Carter.

<sup>196</sup> The White House is the residence and workplace of the United States president, located in Washington D.C.

**Alvin:** Yeah. And he said, “Well,” he said, “Alvin, when I was a freshman at Tech, you were a senior. And,” he said, “the freshmen knew all the seniors, but the seniors didn't know all the freshmen. So I've known you a long time.”

**Irv:** So his 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Georgia Tech would have been what year, Alvin?

**Alvin:** That was in . . . well, it stretched over a period from . . . we had everything . . . the school was founded in 1885.

**Irv:** So this would've been 1985, approximately.

**Alvin:** Yeah. It was in that period, in there, when he came in. But he was an amazing guy. I take my hat off to him. With the retirement he had from Governor and being President, he could have gone down to Plains [Georgia]<sup>197</sup> and been a farmer and taken it easy for the rest of his life. But he surely has not elected to. You have to take your hat off to him for all the good he's trying to do in this whole world. And I think he's set a pattern for future presidents that they'll have a hard time living up.

**Irv:** Well, there's one more individual over there in that group.

**Alvin:** On the lower right hand is Harold Brockey who was . . . also I worked for at Rich's. And Mr. Brockey came to Rich's in the 1950s, had been with Macy's all along. And I had . . . trying to think. He came in the early 1950s, and was in the store for homes for a number of years. And then in the mid-1950s, when we finished building the store in Knoxville [Tennessee], 1955, he moved over to Senior Vice President in charge of merchandising. And then later was made Executive Vice President and then President and Chairman of the Board. I worked with Harold very closely. He and . . . I had the pleasure of working with he and Dick on formulating the biggest part of Rich's expansion program.

**Irv:** How long was Mr. Brock . . . B-R-O-C-K-E-Y?

**Alvin:** Right.

**Irv:** How long was he with Rich's then? You said he came in when you were there, and then . . .

**Alvin:** He came in at about 1951, about 1951, and . . . no . . . yeah . . . about 1951 and he left Rich's about 1974, I guess.

**Irv:** Retired from Rich's in 1974? Okay. Well, we've covered a lot of territory, Alvin.

---

<sup>197</sup> Plains is a town in southern Georgia, in the United States, best known for being the birthplace of President Jimmy Carter.

**Alvin:** I will give to you copies of these family trees, if they're worth anything to you.

**Irv:** I'm sure they will be.

**Alvin:** I think I've got them straight. Actually, these family trees were prepared by Oscar Strauss after he retired. We actually have here a family tree for the Rich family, the Hirsch family, the Strauss family, and the Weil family.

<shuffling papers>

**Alvin:** The Weil family is where the whole Ferst family come in since Grandmother Ferst was a Weil. Miss Ida Ferst was Ida Weil. And he also made one up of the Sartorius family which gets into the Jacobses, and that was done cause it shows how the Jacobses and the Strausses are all tied together. If you trace these far enough back, you can entwine most all of them. I have here something I don't think would be of any value to you, but I got a few years ago to make some additions on the Weil family, just shows some changes and some later additions. It just shows some children and so forth that were added on a Weil family tree that my daughter put together on her computer for the reunion we had with the Weil family a couple of years ago in Savannah.

**Irv:** Well, Alvin, let me thank you on behalf of the Project of Atlanta, the Jewish Oral History, the American Jewish Committee, the Atlanta Jewish Federation, the National Council of Jewish Women. Your recollections and your knowledge of the city of Atlanta and the Jewish community here have, I think, have shed some interesting light.

**Alvin:** Well, Irv, I thank you. I'm glad to do it. I did not prepare any notes. I did not make any outline, so I'm sure it's very rambling. And I'm sure there are a lot of voids that I could have filled in. If anybody's reviewing it and anybody has any question, wants me to fill in anything else, I'll be glad to. Cause I could go on for another 40 hours and still not give everything -

**Irv:** Cause you enjoy it! Thank you again, Alvin.

**Alvin:** You're quite welcome.

<End Tape 2, Side 2>

Cuba Family Archives